“THE THING THAT MAKES IT SO IMPORTANT IS ALSO THE THING THAT MAKES IT CHALLENGING”: ONE UNIVERSITY’S EXPERIENCE WITH DIVERSITY PLANNING

A Dissertation
by
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Abstract

"THE THING THAT MAKES IT SO IMPORTANT IS ALSO THE THING THAT MAKES IT CHALLENGING": ONE UNIVERSITY'S EXPERIENCE WITH DIVERSITY PLANNING

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The academy has faced a multiplicity of issues with regard to diversity. Diversity planning and programming is in its infancy at numerous institutions of higher education. While the importance of diversity is increasingly recognized by colleges and universities, these institutions face challenges to create environments where students, faculty, and staff are fully engaged in the work of diversity. To understand the impact of diversity in higher education, academic leaders must seek to be transformative in their organizational approaches and to explore best practices and innovations in this important arena (Denson & Chang, 2009). Diversity should be integrated in all departments and at all levels of an institution of higher education so that it becomes embedded in the institutional culture and embraced as a priority.

Even though there is an abundance of research regarding diversity, research focused on the process of developing and implementing a successful, integrated diversity plan is very limited. This dissertation aims to study the challenges of integrated diversity planning and implementation by exploring how one specific institution struggled to move from rhetoric to

action. Designed as a qualitative case study, this dissertation included participant observation (including field notes and reflexive journaling), focus group interviews, and individual interviews.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine and explore the perceptions and experiences of members of the Task Force for Diversity at a comprehensive university in order to better understand their viewpoints and their efforts to draft a diversity plan. Another goal was to contribute to better understanding of the complex issues that surround the issue of diversity planning in higher education. Applying the lens of critical theory to interview data, documents, and field notes resulted in a detailed exploration of emergent themes such as apathy, futility, buy-in and leadership, and communication and follow-up. Themes and subthemes are explored in depth, implications for other institutions of higher education interested in pursuing diversity are outlined, and suggestions for future research are presented. As a result of this study, stakeholders in higher education will be more informed of the complex issues surrounding diversity planning and the implementation of integrated diversity initiatives in higher education.

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Dedication

For SBG

May you ever be true to your name.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The United States continues to undergo a major shift in demographics, so much so that industries and organizations recognize the need to promote diversity as well as employ workers who understand nuances from myriad perspectives (Slaughter, 2004). Similarly, institutions of higher education are faced with the need to increase diversity on college and university campuses to better serve today's student population. The question is not whether colleges and institutions want diversity but how higher education should engage in and "build resources through scholarship and policy that will effectively address inequities that keep the world off balance" (Smith, 2009, p. 4).

Some of the buzz words that have permeated academia for the past decade or more include: diversity initiatives, excellence, inclusiveness, tolerance, and acceptance. As the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) points out, diversity should be talked about as "inclusive excellence," for only when an institution of higher education is truly inclusive can it make a claim to excellence (Haring-Smith, 2012). As a result, there has been a movement in many universities to implement initiatives that will allow them to embrace these words as part of their mission, vision, or goals. This Inclusive Excellence Model, which is gaining traction and under consideration at some level of implementation at several colleges and universities across the United States, stresses infusing diversity in all areas of organizational life so that diversity efforts are integrated, systematic, and create real and meaningful change at all levels of the institution (Thomas, 2006). Although the language and

principles of the model are implemented differently across different institutions, they are all grounded in the Inclusive Excellence Model's six core assumptions of:

1. Political and legal dynamics, changing demographics, the emergence of the knowledge economy, and persistent inequalities create the strategic context for a diversity rationale.
2. Diversity is an important institutional resource that should be enhanced, institutionalized, and leveraged toward the goal of institutional excellence.
3. Focus needs to be on ensuring student intellectual and social development and offering the best possible educational environment for all students, irrespective of identity and background.
4. Organizational resources need to be used strategically to ensure that a diverse student body achieves academically at high levels and that those on campus who contribute to that goal are acknowledged and rewarded.
5. Attention needs to be paid to the cultural differences that learners bring to the educational experience, and it must be recognized that these differences are to be used in the service of learning for all students.
6. The intentional study of topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, power, privilege, and the interdisciplinary nature of these topics and others advances the strength of the academy and better situates postsecondary institutions to address emerging challenges and dynamics presented by our evolving environmental context (Williams & Clowney, 2007, p. 8).

The Inclusive Excellence Model builds on previous diversity models and is comprehensive in nature, championing the effectiveness of holistic initiatives in institutions of

higher education. The potential impact of such models is vast and studies of the model to date show that an integrated diversity initiative is more effective and results in increased enrollment and retention of traditionally-underrepresented students and in positive educational outcomes for all students (Humphreys, 2007). Consequently, increasing numbers of institutions of higher education are cultivating similar wide-ranging diversity initiatives to effect change in institutional practices (Galbraith, 2002; Kezar, 2001). More and more, educational leaders understand the importance of adopting diversity as a core value and implementing and embedding diversity initiatives into the institution as a whole (Chun & Evans, 2008; Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2007).

However, some institutions of higher learning seem to have waded into the arena of diversity as a result of the current political climate and/or recent incidents on campus that demanded immediate action. For this dissertation for example, the institution being studied—the University—has until recently struggled with instances of hate crimes, racial profiling, and other discriminatory acts. While the importance of diversity is increasingly recognized by colleges and universities, these institutions, much like the University, face challenges to create environments where students, faculty and staff are fully engaged in the work of diversity.

Notwithstanding the general support for diversity in higher education, progress in this arena has been slow. A possible explanation for the slow progress of diversity in higher education is the entrenchment of a culture and climate that is resistant to change (Kayes, 2006). Institutions of higher education are by nature conservative and traditional, resisting any change that does not seem to have potential to mesh with the culture of the organization. Change is viewed as complex and unpredictable, involving too much risk (Fullan, 2001). Moreover, change is oftentimes perceived to be a threat to individual and organizational power

and control (Cheldelin, 2000). Factors contributing to resistance to change may also include fear of loss, increased tensions, uncertainty about future, and the seeming attack on the status quo (Lohmann, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Diversity is an essential component of the student learning experience in higher education. It is important to consider the critical role that diversity plays in the educational process and to broaden understanding of the influence that diversity can have on the complex experiences (curricular, co-curricular, and interpersonal) of a developing college student (Chun & Evans, 2008). To understand the impact of diversity in higher education, academic leaders must actively seek to be transformative in their organizational approaches and to explore best practices and innovations in this important arena (Denson & Chang, 2009).

According to the Inclusive Excellence framework (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005), diversity should be integrated in all departments and at all levels of an institution of higher education so that it becomes embedded in the institutional culture and embraced as a priority, especially because competition for resources in a university environment is fierce and only initiatives that are identified as part of the strategic mission will be funded. This task is herculean for most colleges and universities as they seek out approaches that will help effectively institutionalize diversity while reflecting the mission and the accepted culture and norms of the institution (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2007). Institutionalizing diversity requires implementing integrated diversity initiatives grounded in new research-based strategies, such as those found in the Inclusive Excellence Model.

Even though there is an abundance of research regarding diversity and its assumed twin, multiculturalism, specific research that delves into understanding how an institution of higher education develops and implements a successful, integrated diversity plan is very limited. Even less research can be found about failed or unsuccessful initiatives, presumably because universities are understandably hesitant to discuss less-than-stellar attempts with a potentially sensitive topic like diversity. Moreover, even though a number of frameworks have been developed for understanding diversity planning in higher education, those models have not examined how the process of diversity planning affects those tasked with the job of "making diversity happen" and how it effects change in an institution (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). This dissertation aims to study the challenges, constraints, and complexities of diversity planning within a specific institution.

The setting for this case study, which I refer to as "the University," is a public institution that was founded in the late 19th century and has a total enrollment of over 17,000 students. The school offers more than 150 undergraduate and graduate majors utilizing a semester-based academic calendar. The campus sits on over a thousand acres of land and provides students with a picturesque setting where it combines the best attributes of a small liberal arts college with those of a large research university. The University aims to provide undergraduate and graduate students rigorous, relevant programs, and to attract and retain excellent faculty. It is committed to the highest level of scholarship and to producing influential world citizens based on its strengths, location, and tradition. The University has been ranked as one of the best colleges in the region, especially due to its affordability.

The University prides itself in the strides it has made in the past two decades, particularly in diversifying its student body, faculty, and staff. Academic year 2013

enrollment showed 55% of enrolled students were women and 12% were ethnic minorities, whereas academic year 1993 enrollment showed 52% were women and only 6% were minorities. Even though the University's demographics have not advanced in step with those of the average college and university in the state and the nation—in part because of its geographic isolation—it touts its commitment to excellence in part by being inclusive and by acknowledging that diversity is a cornerstone of education. The University made efforts, especially in the 1990s and 2000s, to pursue a number of diversity initiatives and programs, including the creation and appointment of diversity committees, faculty fellows, and other university-wide positions, to encourage a climate of understanding and acceptance of differences. Diversity scholarships were offered and staff was hired to coordinate minority student recruitment activities. The aforementioned advancement led to the implementation of the first campus and community-wide Diversity Celebration in 2002.

The University's stated commitment to diversity and inclusiveness has been challenged by instances of hate crimes, racial profiling, and other discriminatory acts against minorities that have occurred on and around the campus in recent years. During my fieldwork, I heard about a troubling incident in which a noose was found at a very visible and public area on campus and seemed to go unnoticed by many at the University. The task of making inquiries into this incident and deciding on next steps was assigned to the person at the University perceived to be the "diversity expert" mainly due to her recognized identity as a racial minority and even though the responses were appropriate and sensitive, they did not seem to be far-reaching or informative to the rest of the University. Some people on campus felt there was a lack of transparency and to date, when asked about this incident, many faculty and staff

respond that they don't know what the University's official response (if any) was and how administrators went about diffusing and resolving the situation.

Such acts caused minority and special interest groups to view the University differently based on how it has responded to those incidents. In 2007, amid both successes and challenges related to diversity at the University, the Chancellor convened a forty-six member Task Force for Diversity composed of administrators, faculty, and students and charged the members to create "a blueprint that will enable the University to develop an increasingly vibrant and inclusive living, learning, and working community" (*A Plan for Diversity*, 2009, p. 13). The plan would ideally:

- focus on more than just numbers;
- promote access – increasing financial support for those students from low socio-economic backgrounds;
- increase internationalization – enhancing experiences for students, faculty, and staff while also increasing the University's presence on a global level;
- prepare students to live in a diverse world;
- create an environment where diversity is woven into the fabric of the institution – where respect and understanding of differences are present;
- focus on values that cannot be learned solely from textbooks;
- promote respect and encourage open dialogue about differences with pride; and
- interface diversity with all other aspects of the campus life (p. 13).

The implementation of the plan would show the institution's commitment to excellence and inclusivity of all university community members, with a clear acknowledgment of diversity as a cornerstone of education.

A Plan for Diversity drew heavily from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) initiative, Making Excellence Inclusive, that "re-envisions diversity and inclusion as a multi-layered process through which we achieve excellence in learning; research and teaching; student development; institutional functioning; local and global community engagement; workforce development; and more" (2008, para.1). Making Excellence Inclusive is AAC&U's guiding framework for access, student success, and high-quality learning. It is designed to "help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations" (AAC&U, 2008, para. 1). Through inclusive excellence, institutions of higher education can address diversity, inclusion, and equity via an active process through which excellence in learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities is achieved. In fact, the Making Excellence Inclusive initiative requires that inequities be uncovered and that effective educational practices are developed so that institutional change is both achieved and sustained.

The members of the Task Force for Diversity also found a series of three papers commissioned by the AAC&U particularly useful, as evidenced by their inclusion as source documents for *A Plan for Diversity*. The series focused on helping universities move from viewing diversity as an isolated outcome to weaving diversity into the fabric of the institution. In fact, *A Plan for Diversity* (2009) defined diversity as:

> Encompassing the myriad aspects of humanity that make us who we are. Diversity is inclusive, not exclusive; therefore, it embraces and advances knowledge of difference, while also recognizing and celebrating our similarities. Diversity is the manifestation of difference within a community that includes, but is not limited to

> race/ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, spiritual values, creed, sex, gender identity and expression, political affiliation, age, disability, veteran status, and sexual orientation, as well as economic and educational background, geographic location, and pedagogical systems. The university recognizes the significance of fostering and nurturing a living and learning environment conducive to and promoting awareness, respect, knowledge and understanding. In the continued positive evolution of the academy, diversity is recognized as an essential binding agent in the interdisciplinary approach to education, as well as in the greater life experience. (p. 4)

One of the foundational principles of the Task Force for Diversity is the deep understanding that isolated initiatives are not sufficient in the University's pursuit of diversity efforts. In fact, the Task Force for Diversity used as its template the University's historical successes with diversity programming, along with the Chancellor's outlined goals regarding diversity at the University, when it established the strategic directions for *A Plan for Diversity*: access and equity – employees, access and equity – students, campus climate, community partnerships, curriculum and research, and learning and development. These strategic directions formed the foundation for the Task Force for Diversity's subcommittees focusing on each of these directions.

Institutions of higher education tend to theorize diversity but many fail to realize that diversity is difficult to achieve. This dissertation examined how one specific institution, the University, struggled over decades to move from rhetoric to action. This dissertation is a qualitative case study centered on the University's most recent diversity planning process and what some of the participants experienced during their tenure as members of a task force

focused on diversity. The study also explored situations where and reasons why diversity is a struggle, especially in traditionally White institutions.

Most college and university administrators understand and accept that diversity provides innumerable benefits to faculty, staff, and students. Research has shown that diversity in both the faculty and student population leads to great benefits in education for all students (Cejda & Murray, 2010; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). Studies have also shown that students who have interaction with a broad range of peers from diverse backgrounds have enhanced critical thinking skills and advanced levels of engagement compared to students who only interact with people with whom they are most familiar and/or comfortable (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Nishishiba, Nelson, & Shinn, 2005; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005).

A review of the literature regarding diversity showed that there have been several institutions of higher education that have gone through the diversity planning process and recorded varying degrees of success (Guy, Reiff, & Oliver, 1998). Senior administrators usually convene diversity councils or task forces to document issues related to diversity and to propose recommendations for change. These groups typically compile their findings into diversity action plans and official university policy documents that serve as a "primary means by which postsecondary institutions formally advance and influence policy for building diverse, inclusive campus communities" (Iverson, 2007, p. 587). It does not matter so much whether the diversity planning efforts were large or small-scale or if they were broadly or narrowly focused. What mattered was if diversity planning and implementation efforts were focused on capacity-building, cultivating vision and buy-in, establishing accountability processes, and providing an adequate level of financial, human, and technical resources to

effect change (Williams & Clowney, 2007). This study will explore the complex experience of the process, with emphasis on illuminating the participants' experiences.

Change is difficult in higher education and organizational dynamics often perplex those tasked with diversity planning, rendering them unable to adequately complete their mission. This is where my study participants found themselves, i.e., feeling hopeless and helpless as they were not able to create successfully and implement a diversity plan for the University. Studies have shown that once a diversity plan has been developed there are typically frequent delays leading to superficial and incomplete diversity implementation efforts (Birnbaum, 1988). Indeed, if colleges and universities want their diversity planning efforts to be more than symbolic, they must approach the diversity implementation process with a focus on real change, results, and impact (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005).Thus, the university's diversity planning process, as well as the task force that was formed to create the University's diversity plan, could be perceived as emblematic rather than aimed at truly implementing integrated diversity initiatives.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to discover and explore the perceptions and experiences of members of the Task Force for Diversity as they worked to fulfill their charge to draft a diversity plan for the University. My primary research goal was to contextualize the experiences of the research participants, all members of the University's Task Force for Diversity, during the planning and drafting process of *A Plan for Diversity*. Another goal was to understand the common and/or shared perspectives among task force members regarding diversity in higher education. A further expected outcome of this research was to contribute to

a better understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding diversity planning in higher education. Guided by the primary research questions listed below, I expect that this research study will inform the various stakeholders in higher education of the difficulties surrounding diversity initiatives and suggest some steps to develop more effective practice in the planning and implementation of diversity initiatives in higher education.

The research questions focused on the individual research participants and their personal understanding of diversity and how it impacted their contributions to the Task Force for Diversity. Specifically, the questions guided both the researcher and the study participants in answering the following:

1. How do the study participants understand and experience the issue of diversity generally and at the University specifically?
2. How do the study participants experience the process of drafting and revising the proposed diversity plan?
3. How do study participants perceive the final diversity plan? What do they describe as the strengths and weaknesses of the diversity plan?

In both my review of the literature and in interviews with higher education administrators who are given the responsibility of "making diversity happen," it has become clearer to me that there is a noticeable paucity of knowledge on how best to create and execute an initiative that truly focuses on making an institution diverse in an integrated manner. Diversity is a fact of life in American higher education and will continue to influence the state of education and, by extension, society as a whole. Educators and administrators, along with institutions of higher education, must attain a better understanding of the processes through

which integrated diversity initiatives are successfully implemented in colleges and universities.

Significance of the Study

An integrated diversity initiative is a comprehensive and versatile movement that impacts the system, culture, and fabric of the institution, making the effort an established and accepted part of the structure of colleges and universities. Colleges and universities struggled with various characterizations and methodologies with regard to issues of diversity during the last few decades when multiculturalism became a synonym for diversity in the 1990s. On the other hand, there is a divergence of opinion regarding these labels and their exact meaning, especially when it relates to higher education. Fortunately, current definitions for diversity encompass not just race and ethnicity but have expanded to include gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and class (Kezar, 2005). Therefore, diversity programming should include minorities as well as the multiplicity of factors that define someone as being "other."

This study was significant in providing a better understanding of the experiences and viewpoints of the study participants—members from the University's Task Force for Diversity—as they drafted the University's proposed integrated diversity plan. The lack of research literature regarding diversity planning practices in higher education requires broader understanding of institutions that have pursued this endeavor with varying degrees of success (Cox, 2001; Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). This research study allowed me to deepen my understanding of the context of the research participants' experiences during the planning and drafting process of *A Plan for Diversity* and the uncertain outcomes of the diversity planning process.

By understanding the practices and strategies employed by the members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University, readers will learn about the struggles and the challenges they faced as they endeavored to fulfill the charge that was given to the task force and appreciate the collective viewpoints of the study participants regarding diversity in higher education. In fact, readers can more clearly grasp the contexts in which the institution and its personnel, including students, work from and, as Maxwell (2005) stated, "the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions" (p. 22). This is important so that readers will have enhanced comprehension of the intricacies and the nuances surrounding the issue of diversity in higher education. Finally, this study will apprise the stakeholders in higher education of the issues surrounding diversity planning and suggest some steps to develop more effective planning and implementation of integrated diversity initiatives in higher education.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

A conceptual framework usually consists of multiple theories that serve as paradigms for the collection of data, analysis, and the interpretation of results. Therefore, as the primary researcher in this study, I considered a range of perspectives in order to discover the research participants' viewpoints regarding the process by which the University considers and plans for diversity initiatives. The epistemology for this study was grounded in constructionism as well as interpretivism. Crotty (1998) defined constructionism as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42).

My study fits the constructionist mold because it highlights the lived experiences of the study participants, their reality as members of both the Task Force and University communities, and my role as the participant-observer and researcher. Constructionists believe that people make their own realities and that the researcher is not distinct from the study participants. In fact, the interaction between researcher and study participants is a necessary and vital component of the research process. In addition, constructionism posits that knowledge arises from social processes and interaction; thus, I focused on the interaction between study participants in their roles as members of the Task Force for Diversity and diversity planning process at the University (Miller & Brewer, 2003). I found that most of the study participants, like me, are passionate about and committed to diversity, and want to assist in the implementation of change initiatives so that others can see diversity in a new light at the University.

Moreover, the constructionist or interpretivist paradigm is one that is relational, subjective, interactive, and interdependent. It produces knowledge that is context specific (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This paradigm allowed me, the researcher, the opportunity to gather rich data that emerged from within a specific context and enabled me to conduct in-depth exploration in response to the research questions. More specifically, I was able to answer "how" and "why" questions as I gathered data from a variety of sources and used the unified data to highlight the experiences of the members of the Task Force for Diversity.

I utilized a case study research design for this study because my goal was to gain more in-depth understanding of how the task force members perceived the process of developing and drafting the University's *A Plan for Diversity*. Case study research utilizes various methods and methodologies wherein data is usually gathered through the ethnographic tools of

participant observation and in-depth interviewing (Glesne, 2006). Case study research requires a detailed description and understanding of the setting and the participants because context is crucial in presenting research findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The researcher's main focus is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Case study methodology was suitable to this research study because the Task Force for Diversity members' perceptions and experiences involved dynamic, complex, and contextually sensitive data (Jacobson, Foxx, & Mulick, 2004). Through listening to stories and experiences of the members of the Task Force for Diversity, I was able to glean insight and a better perspective of the importance of the participants' unique roles and positions that helped create deeper meaning for this case study regarding diversity in higher education (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Methods

This research utilized intensive, semi-structured qualitative interviews with 20 members (one-half of the total number of members) of the Task Force for Diversity at the University. These participants were made up of students, faculty, and staff who had agreed to be interviewed either individually or as part of a focus group. The faculty and administrators who participated in this study have worked in the field of higher education between three-and-a-half years to 35 years, with the average length of employment at the University around 20 years. I conducted face-to-face focus group and individual interviews and recorded and transcribed all of the interviews. I then reviewed transcripts for gaps or clarity, and finally, coded and analyzed all the data.

In addition, I conducted informal discussions with several faculty members, administrators, and students regarding their thoughts and experiences around the subject of diversity at the University. These discussions provide a rich context for the current situation and climate at the University.

Organization of the Study

This research study is organized using the standard five-chapter model. In Chapter 1, the introductory section, I describe the issue of diversity in the field of higher education and present my problem statement. I also address the purpose of the study, briefly describe the University and its proposed diversity plan, *A Plan for Diversity,* state the significance of my study, present my research questions and theoretical framework for the research study, and provide a brief overview of methodology used.

Chapter 2 involves a comprehensive review of literature on diversity in higher education including rationale, history, sociopolitical, and legal perspectives. The concepts of diversity planning and integrated diversity initiatives are also introduced and expanded. In addition, critical theory is presented as it relates to inequality in education and examines the concept of unequal power distribution in society and social injustice.

In Chapter 3, I describe my research design and methodology, including my rationale for utilizing qualitative research and a case study approach. I also present phenomenology and critical theory as well as sections on validity and trustworthiness, the role of the researcher and subjectivity, along with research ethics. Moreover, in this chapter, I also discuss the topics of limitations and representation. Finally, I cover participant and site selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of the findings and the major themes that emerged from coding the data. It also provides background information about the institution and the Task Force for Diversity, discusses study participants responses to the interview questions and findings from other data sources, and presents the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study.

In Chapter 5, I offer a summary of the findings and responses to research questions as well as recommendations, including implications for diversity planning in higher education. Study limitations and suggestions for further research are also presented.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

> The institutions that will be leaders in the coming century will be those that build their excellence on the foundation of diversity. (American Association of State Colleges and Universities/National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges Task Force on Diversity, 2005, p. 4)

The following is a review of the literature related to diversity in higher education, with emphasis on diversity planning and integrated diversity initiatives. The history and rationale for diversity in higher education, including its definition and sociopolitical and legal influences, are presented. It is then followed by the importance of integration, challenges and resistance to integration, opportunities and best practices in planning for and integrating diversity initiatives.

Overview

As the United States population continues to diversify and demands for a workforce capable of interacting within a global society increase, institutions of higher education are expected to advance a diverse campus environment that can better equip students to be successful in a society that is becoming more global in nature (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Diversity scholars agree that students need to be exposed to curricular and out-of-classroom opportunities that provide diverse interactions and learning experiences (Chun & Evans, 2008). Denson and Chang (2009) found that students who are educated in diverse settings are far more likely to work and live in both racially and ethnically

diverse environments after they graduate. Moreover, because they were able to study and discuss issues related to diversity in their academic courses and interact with a diverse set of peers while on (and off) campus, they are better prepared for life in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

Further research on the topic of diversity in higher education reveals that there are positive student outcomes in areas such as personal and intellectual development, critical thinking and other academic skills, and increased grade point average (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Milem, 2000; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Diversity should be treated as a priority in higher education because diverse universities have been proven to produce significant benefits for all students. In addition, Gurin argued that racial segregation and separation, which are "historically rooted in our national life can be broken by diversity experiences in higher education" (as cited in Tatum, 1997, p. 213). Because institutions of higher education are expected to prepare the next generation to be successful in a globalized society, effective diversity initiatives that promote students' engagement with authentic diversity must be implemented.

To understand the impact of diversity in higher education and effectively implement diversity programming, it is necessary to explore best practices and innovations regarding the critical role that diversity plays in the educational process. Implementing diversity initiatives also necessitates recognition of priorities and the commitment of resources, especially given the fiscal realities of colleges and universities (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Colleges and universities need to understand both the necessity of diversity as well as the impact that diversity has on the viability and sustainability of an institution (DeNisi & Griffin, 2001).

Definition of Diversity

Diversity has multiple, dynamic dimensions frequently attached to ideologies that are not necessarily valued by those in power in institutions of higher education; hence, diversity is difficult to fully integrate into the organizational culture of colleges and universities. In fact, the term diversity is used broadly and any effort to define or communicate the importance of diversity remains confusing and challenging (Levinson, 2003). In its most comprehensive definition, diversity could be taken as a word that applies to "all" rather than a term that could be used to highlight inclusivity, which is a goal in educating the majority about those who are truly underrepresented and often experience discrimination (Wentling, n.d.). While there is not a single definition that truly captures the broad range of differences diversity encompasses, researchers and higher education officials agree that it is necessary for diversity to be embedded in the institutional fabric of higher education in order to effect change.

The literature contains transformational theories related to connecting the academy to meaningful diversity work. Strategies for anchoring diversity to institutional core values are in demand (Chun & Evans, 2008). In fact, the focus of diversity work has shifted in recent years from "a concept centered around race and gender, the civil rights movement, and social justice to a craft for making quality decisions in the midst of differences, similarities, tensions, and complexities" (Thomas, 2006, p. 45). These elements are strongly visible in this research study and it is important to note that these are factors that played a pivotal role in the University's diversity planning process.

In fact, most appropriate for my purposes in this study is the definition of diversity by Flowers (2004) who stated that diversity is "the complex interaction of constructs, issues, and experiences related to race/ethnicity, religious differences, regional differences, social/class

differences, sexual orientation, gender differences, and disabilities" (p. 7). This definition is fitting for this study because I have worked from the point of view that differences exist both between and within dominant and underrepresented groups, specifically within higher education.

History of Diversity in Higher Education

The diversity movement in higher education has its roots in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, a period replete with the early influences of immigration and globalization. In the 1960s, a major push began to diversify campuses in order to deal with myriad issues linked to the increase and progress of more diverse populations and programs in institutions of higher education. Many believe that the roots of the cultural diversity movement can be traced to the Civil Rights Movement of this era when student supporters demanded greater access for ethnic minority students. The authority figures within higher education listened to these demands. In fact, the earliest initiatives to increase minority access on predominantly White campuses were "promoted by desegregation mandates as well as social justice concerns grounded in the democratic principles of equal opportunity and equality" (Chang, 2005, p. 6).

At once inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and alarmed by the ghetto rebellions and the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., leaders in institutions of higher education committed to increased diversification on their campuses (Nora, 1993). At this point in the history of academia, there were increased opportunities for diverse faculty to serve on campuses from which they were previously turned away. Students began to benefit from programs based on expanding equality and anti-discrimination (AAC&U, 2008).

However, the drive to increase the numbers of underrepresented students and faculty in colleges and universities did not result in the expected gains in numbers from those groups. The various social movements of the day, including civil rights and the push for the equality of women, compelled leaders in higher education to act. Students and faculty from underrepresented groups demanded entrance and full acceptance into colleges and universities across the country. Their actions brought in new consciousness and challenged the prevailing notions of equity that, at the time, were dominated by White, male, middle-class individuals (Maher & Tetrault, 2007; Nelson, 2007).

In the 1990s and 2000s, however, diversity experts recognized that institutions of higher education could not remain focused on merely recruitment of more women and minorities, insisting instead that diversity should become embedded in core values of colleges and universities (Aguirre, 2000; Musil, Garcia, Hudgins, Nettles, Sedlacek, & Smith, 1999; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Consequently, diversity initiatives have grown to include a wide array of purposes, issues, and programs in colleges and universities (Orlans, 1992). These initiatives include race, gender, and other ways that educators, administrators, and politicians categorized people including class, age, religious affiliation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability. Traditionally, such labels have been at the root of what divides society; however, diversity initiatives seek to use these same identifiers as catalysts for bringing people together.

Rationale for Diversity in Higher Education

Importance of Diversity Initiatives. Academia has been both hesitant and slow to accept diversity as a significant element in higher education and institutions of higher education still struggle to be a major force in the field of diversity (Williams, Berger, &

McClendon, 2005). However, this fact does not mean that progress has not been made in colleges and universities across the country. Advancements since the 1960s include expanding access, broadening programs, and providing increasingly tolerant campuses. Most university systems have made significant advances even in the face of difficulty. Smith and Wolf-Wendel (2005) wrote:

> Higher education has confronted the challenges of diversity. While earlier formulations focused mostly on issues of access and preparation, diversity issues have broadened to include questions concerning pedagogy, the curriculum, notions of community, retention, decision making, faculty composition and evaluation, leadership, the role of staff, funding resources, and fundamental questions concerning institutional mission. In the past students were the focus, but now all constituents are part of the discussion. (p. 1)

Diversity scholars have shifted from thinking about stand-alone diversity initiatives such as a recruitment of underrepresented students and faculty or curriculum development, to more comprehensive strategic planning for institutionalizing diversity initiatives (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, Bauman, & Vallejo, 2004). Institutionalization refers to the "process by which social expectations of appropriate organizational forms and behavior come to take on rule-like status in social thought and action" (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988, p. 562). There is evidence in the literature of the effectiveness of institutionalization efforts in higher education (Lucas, 2003).

Long-time diversity practitioners affirm that the process of creating an integrated diversity initiative has become more all-encompassing. In fact, many more colleges and universities have devoted months and, in some cases, years to solicit input from faculty,

administrators, students, and even community members and implementing a more comprehensive and integrated plan for diversity initiatives (Humphreys, 2000). Gurin (1999) made a persuasive argument about such integration and touted higher education's unique opportunity to enhance the cognitive and psychosocial development of college students. She found that universities are ideal institutions to cultivate such development. Gurin argued that undergraduates are at a critical stage in their human growth and development when diversity, broadly defined, "can facilitate greater awareness of the learning process, better critical thinking skills, and better preparation for the many challenges they will face as involved citizens in a democratic, multiracial society" (as cited in Chang, Witt, Jones, & Hakuta, 2003, p. 103).

Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) wrote that diversity, whether it be "classroom diversity, diversity programming…or learning across diverse groups of students in the college environment, now constitutes important initiatives to enhance the education of all students" (pp. 362-363). In fact, Chang, Astin, and Kim (2004) found that "experiences with interactional diversity – structuring college classrooms, out-of-class living and learning environments, and finding ways to bring people together who have diverse views…is beneficial for the learning and development of all students" (p. 531). A very substantial portion of colleges' and universities' curriculum is enhanced by the discourse made possible by the rich and varied backgrounds of students and faculty. An equally significant part of education takes place outside the classroom, in extracurricular activities where students learn how to work together, as well as to compete; how to exercise leadership, as well as to build consensus. In addition, Smith and Schonfeld (2000) stated that diversity "creates greater opportunities for social support, role models, and mentoring for students, as well as greater

opportunities for individuals to be seen as an individual, thus breaking down stereotypes" (p. 18).

Of course, colleges and universities with populations of racially and ethnically diverse students and faculty do not necessarily provide educational benefits. Although bringing together a diverse group of students and professionals is an important first step in creating opportunities for students to learn from diversity, it cannot be the only step that is taken (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Diversity practices must be consistently implemented and "such efforts must be continuous and not episodic in nature" (Bok, 2006). In the end, institutions of higher education must provide "stimulating courses covering historical, cultural, and social bases of diversity and community, and they must create additional opportunities and expectations for students to interact across racial and other social differences" (Chang, 2005, p. 11).

These systemic diversity efforts call for change and for students, faculty, and administrators "to shift, assess their values, have an openness to new ideas, and act in different ways" (Morey, 2000, p. 27). In addition, many diversity practitioners highlight the importance of scholarship and transforming the curriculum while lauding the effects of collaborative work between students and faculty. For many educators, diversity means "full and complete integration of all races and cultures into curricular content, instructional processes, and all interactions related to schools" (Stockdill, Duhon-Sells, Olson, & Patton, 1992, p. 23).

Musil and her colleagues (1999) acknowledged that many colleges and universities have done more than just diversify their student body, realizing the benefits diversity holds for all students. Some have begun to incorporate diversity into curricula, policies, and general practices as they recognize the need to prepare students for success in an interdependent global

society. Smith (1990) observed that there is an increasing commitment in colleges and universities to educate all students for a pluralistic world and to create environments that can embrace diversity. Academic institutions, however, must prepare students for the workforce and equip them to become global citizens by promoting and modeling a diverse yet inclusive environment. One of the ways that this can be done is through providing diversity training to faculty, staff, and administrators so that they can enhance students' (and their own) educational and sociocultural experiences during their tenure in academia.

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2002), institutions of higher education are changing course content and requirements to include numerous forms of diversity. More students are now studying the very legacies of hierarchy and exclusion previously considered irrelevant in higher learning. Diversity initiatives in institutions of higher education regularly include curricular change in their statement of goals, but the curriculum does not seem to be as important as recruitment, retention, and climate. A reason could be that most colleges and universities grant individual faculty autonomy when it comes to curricular development and consequently do not feel the need to comply with "mandated" curricular changes. Additionally, colleges and institutions are also broadening their strategies to focus more on issues of teaching and learning, engaging faculty and students, and promoting intergroup dialogue.

Training of faculty in areas of diversity is also enabling changes to take place in the basic foundation of colleges and universities. Consultants and diversity workshops proliferated in colleges and universities in the beginning of the 21st century. However, the question of whether or not these expensive efforts made an impact on campuses is yet to be determined. Just like any other politically-charged issue, administrators endeavored to prove

that action was being taken to affect change at all levels in colleges and universities. Corrigan (2003) found that these efforts had limited positive outcomes due to the constant changes in management in institutions of higher education.

Planning. A review of the current literature highlights some examples of best practices in implementing integrated diversity initiatives but progress in most colleges and universities has crept along very slowly because of the gulf that often exists between university policy and faculty commitment. While there is a plethora of material on the role of specific factors such as curriculum development, recruitment and retention practices for students, faculty, and staff, and even promoting cultural awareness in colleges and universities, there is scant information available about how to weave diversity into every facet of programming, policy, and the foundation of an institution (Jones Brayboy, 2003). Brown (2004) has suggested that there are numerous reasons for this gulf; however, the burden is on colleges and universities to cultivate approaches and implement initiatives that actually produce more diverse communities in education.

While many institutions of higher education now recognize the importance of diversity, initiating diversity programming in colleges and universities is often difficult because many consider this programming as a free-standing policy instead of critical to the core and structure of university life (Jones Brayboy, 2003). Institutions must understand and accept that it is necessary for the work of diversity to consider the numerous stages and components of the campus climate and the unique challenges and opportunities that diversity initiatives may present to students, faculty, and administrators (Chang, 2005).

It is logical, then, for different institutions to use a variety of approaches in implementing diversity initiatives. For example, community colleges typically enroll more

minority students than universities (Gutierrez, Castaneda, & Katsinas, 2002). This factor notwithstanding, the culture of community colleges still mostly replicates the ideals of the majority group (Bower, 2002). Conversely, in more elite universities, there is a more homogenous group but better utilization of plans and programs for the promotion of diversity that are included in the universities' central initiatives (Pope, 2002). Consequently, the litmus test for colleges and universities is to employ diversity initiatives that impact the institution's core identity and that will alter its long-held policies.

Movement in the organizational culture in colleges and universities occurred as a result of population changes in the 1970s and beyond. Minority enrollment in higher education rose steadily in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by a steady decline beginning in the mid-1980s (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Nora, 1993). As a response to unsuccessful recruitment and retention of minorities in the 1980s and 1990s, institutions of higher learning set out to use strategic planning to tackle diversity issues. Diversity was a vital component of the overall strategic planning process in some institutions, while in other colleges and universities diversity was the only focus of the planning process. Even as strategic planning in higher education was besieged by opposition, hostility, and apathy during the implementation process, it began to challenge assumptions about diversity and emphasize organizational learning (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee, 2005).

Although these processes were important and necessary, diversity planning was still weighed down with the politics and the accommodations of competing groups within higher education. Even as recommendations, initiatives, and strategies increase, equity in education remains a much-sought-after goal (Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006). Iverson (2007), in an analysis of diversity action plans at 20 U.S. universities, found that "the

discursive representation of people of color in these policies is neither natural nor neutral…rather; this representation is embedded in the hegemonic system of White supremacy" (p. 587). Hu-DeHart (2000) discovered that diversity plans use White racial experience as a yardstick by which minority groups' progress and success in higher education is measured, thus…"perpetuating the historically constructed racial order and subordination of minorities." (p. 42). Diversity planning, it seemed, at least from the surface, only served to maintain the status quo.

Consequently, strategic planning focusing on diversity in colleges and universities faced many difficulties that hampered organizational change. As a result, senior university administrators and officials spearheaded diversity initiatives to deal with opposition to the diversity planning process that often included increasing consciousness on diversity issues for students, faculty, and staff, and engaging minority groups in designing diversity programs (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006). In essence, issues of diversity became an integral element of the planning process in academia, with many institutions of higher education dealing with issues of underrepresentation and exclusion with limited success (Humphreys, 2007). In fact, two common complaints from advocates of diversity were that diversity plans and programs were not being included in the core structures and strategies of colleges and universities and that White members of faculties were frequently reluctant to promote diversity (Jones Brayboy, 2003).

Recognizing the need for such pluralism, the American Association of Colleges and Universities urged leaders in higher education to move toward creating a campus culture that celebrates the differences among members of the community (AAC&U, 2002). When administrators make an investment in and commitment to diversity on campus, students make

broad educational gains and the spirit of diversity extends beyond the university walls into the community.

Mirroring this concept is the declaration sanctioned by the presidents of sixty-two research universities and by the American Association of Universities that reads:

> We speak first and foremost as educators. We believe that our students benefit significantly from education that takes place within a diverse setting. In the course of their university education, our students encounter and learn from others who have backgrounds and characteristics very different from their own. As we seek to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century, the educational value of such encounters will become more important, not less, than in the past. (Tice, 2005, p. 225)

Another promising development in higher education over the last few decades is the emergence of the diversity strategic plan. The majority of these plans have been created at large colleges and universities where they were viewed as best practice because they called attention to the importance of diversity, established measurable goals, and engaged a wide variety of campus constituents (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). However, many other institutions of higher education quickly realized the challenges of planning for and implementing diversity plans. Even with the best laid intentions and concrete goals and objectives, the work of diversity planning sometimes becomes nebulous and ambiguous (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005).

Diversity plans should be integrated into an institution's overall strategic plan and cannot be a separate effort or added on as a postscript to the planning process (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Humphreys, 2000). Moreover, colleges and universities must not focus merely on admitting or hiring minorities. Instead, they must focus on making diversity a part of the way

the university operates (Aguirre, 2000; Musil et al., 1999; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). In fact, scholars studying diversity in higher education have shifted from thinking about isolated diversity initiatives to thinking more comprehensively about the ways that diversity can be institutionalized (Bensimon et al., 2004). Indeed, researchers have long argued that diversity should be embedded in the infrastructure of an institution rather than limited to isolated initiatives. They contend that institutionalizing diversity should be a process rather than an outcome (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Implementing diversity in higher education requires continuous planning and perseverance as well as focused efforts to achieve the essential culture shift leading to an institution's structural transformation (Williams, 2006). Such an enterprise necessitates the investment of resources and identification of measurements to assess and ensure success. Moreover, leadership must communicate, both formally and informally, that diversity is a priority at the institution and that open dialogue is not only accepted, but also is encouraged and welcomed (Williams, 2008).

Leadership. A review of the literature has shown that institutions of higher education that have been successful in implementing integrated diversity initiatives tend to have a strong leader who has a sincere belief in the institution's efforts. If a university chancellor or president makes a commitment to implement such initiatives at all levels within the institution, the likelihood of success is increased. Strong university leadership is essential, even crucial, to the effort. Institutionalizing diversity relies heavily upon strong leadership as well as commitment of all faculty and staff. The essential blend of strong leadership and "boots on the ground" initiatives are vital to the process of institutionalizing diversity at the organizational level (Knox, 2005).

Institutional diversity has been identified as one of many priority items on numerous university presidents' list of issues to address. Faced with pressure (political and otherwise) from both internal and external constituents, university leaders must understand and accept these realities while simultaneously strategically planning to embed diversity in their institutions (Kezar, Eckel, Contreros-McGavin, & Quaye, 2008). While there is value in engaging a wide variety of educational and community leaders in the critical work of diversity planning, researchers nevertheless emphasize the importance of the college and/or university president operating as the primary medium for initiating and sustaining diversity initiatives. In essence, the president is the instrument for weaving diversity into the fabric of the institution (Kezar, 2007).

On the other hand, the president should not be the only person in the institution capable of or responsible for establishing institutionalized diversity efforts. Diversity programming, not unlike numerous comparable initiatives, is likely to conclude when those who launched the programs leave the organization (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006). Sustaining diversity therefore, requires collaborative effort at every level. Diversity efforts cannot move forward if diversity is only the responsibility of specific offices or personnel such as the President, a Chief Diversity Officer or an Office of Multicultural Affairs. Although it is also necessary to have these offices in place, an effective integrated diversity approach requires involvement from a wide-ranging base of constituents. In addition, institutionalized diversity must be demonstrated through mission statements, curriculum design, strategic plans, recruitment, and retention efforts so that diversity competency becomes a priority and core value at the institution (Williams, 2008).

Educational leaders face numerous potential roadblocks in the pursuit of diversity including, but not limited to, the political pressure and challenge of shifting the campus culture, resistance from predominately White constituents or even from specific cultural groups, and even debate and conflict between groups regarding the direction and focus of proposed diversity efforts (Kezar, 2008). Moreover, although college and university faculty and administrators may recognize the necessity of being more committed to broadening the culture of diversity, only a small number of these faculty and administrators intentionally find avenues to promote it (Aguirre, 2000). In fact, broadly-speaking, faculty— specifically White faculty—were identified as promoting barriers with regard to curricular transformation and in the recruitment of underrepresented faculty (Kezar, 2008).

Another challenge that institutional leaders face is the lack of information available regarding best practices in diversity. Diversity work is complex and educational leaders are seeking new ways to understand the numerous nuances to gain more insight into successful implementation strategies. What is truly important, yet decidedly lacking, is the literature regarding specific strategies used by a benchmark institution to institutionalize diversity. The fact remains that although numerous colleges and universities have implemented programmatic initiatives to advance diversity, these steps have not necessarily changed the contexts that impact organizational leadership (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). Several proponents of organizational leadership suggest implementing diversity by borrowing plans and concepts from the business sector (Bowen, Bok, & Burkhart, 1999). Still others insist that analyzing colleges and universities' human resource practices and policies will provide insight into the effects of the addition of minorities into leadership positions.

It is imperative for the leadership of an institution of higher education to stress that diversity work is a priority (Davis, 2002). There is a need, therefore, to develop future leaders who are passionate about and invested in the organization's programs for diversity to ensure ongoing stability (Williams, 2006). As with any major undertaking affecting a large community of people, strong and courageous leadership is necessary in the implementation of integrated diversity initiatives. Colleges and universities need leaders who are willing to take risks, articulate compelling visions, and follow through with planned objectives. Such leadership is needed in both senior and junior leadership positions in academia (Humphreys, 2000).

Sociopolitical and Legal Influences. Diversity initiatives in colleges and universities in the 1960s and 1970s were largely implemented as reactions to the atmosphere in the political culture of the day and centered on the enrollment of minority students and the development of programs specifically targeting minorities (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Attempts at diversity programming, initially geared towards increasing minority admission to primarily homogenous campuses, later expanded to include gender equity and other key issues.

These efforts were driven by what has been noted as "desegregation mandates as well as social justice concerns grounded in the democratic principles of equal opportunity and equality" (Chang, 2005, p. 6). Such modifications in diversity initiatives resulted in improved support programs for minority students and an increase in minority faculty. However, these attempts were met with opposition, with some groups equating diversity advancements as an assault and insult to the institution (Ibarra, 2001; Losco & Fife, 2000). In fact, the admission of minorities into colleges and universities challenged the long-held elitist position of power and privilege of higher education in a globalized society (Arthur & Shapiro, 1995).

Colleges and universities, after all, are fundamentally political organizations that seem to become more political over time, and therefore, political approaches for generating and bargaining for change are oftentimes necessary to examine and evaluate the appropriate context for instituting change (Gumport, 2000; Smith, & Parker, 2005). Members of privileged groups often assume that the advancement of activities for underrepresented groups constitutes the removal of resources and support from them. Conversely, minorities often lack the same influence as dominant groups and fail to fight for their needs, resulting in limited resources and programs for them to be successful (Kezar, 2005).

The literature has shown that politics often obstructs the change process in higher education because if an issue is deemed to be too political, then action will not take place. Many educational leaders tend to shy away from conflict because they are not trained to negotiate the political dimensions of various policies even though research suggests that politicking may be in fact useful in instituting change (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Kezar, 2001).

As diversity supporters continue to promote more integrated initiatives in colleges and universities, many administrators find that they must react to criticisms against the actions that they take to uphold such initiatives. More and more, university policy regarding diversity is being influenced by the courts (Chang et al., 2003). Two recent U.S. Supreme Court cases, Gratz et al. v. Bollinger and Grutter v. Bollinger et al., have upheld the affirmative action policies at public universities, but reactions indicate that "affirmative action, diversity, and the status of students of color on predominantly White campuses will continue to be contentious issues" (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005, p. 91). Although these court decisions have affected universities' admissions policies, social climates, and sometimes even curricula, it is

imperative that institutions of higher education "must not lose the practical and political battles to maintain racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student bodies" (Bollinger, 2007, p. 1) and thereby lose themselves in the process.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Integrated Diversity Initiatives

When asked about the progress of diversity on their campus, it is common for educational leaders to share stories and a laundry list of activities. In fact, as the dialogue regarding diversity has intensified, the list of activities and special projects in colleges and universities have also increased. However, as programs and activities have increased, colleges and universities' ability to monitor growth has not followed (Smith & Parker, 2005). There is also considerable discrepancy with regard to viewpoints on diversity between minority and non-minority students and faculty. Minority faculty do not feel that diversity is taken seriously and, therefore, instituted at all levels (Cress & Hart, 2002). Although most colleges and universities have seemingly welcomed diversity initiatives, they have not, as Hutchinson and Hyer (2000) stated, "become a compelling vision" (p. ix).

Challenges and Resistance

In my review of the literature it has become apparent to me that, to some people, diversity means substantially less than full integration. In fact, leaders in higher education will often focus on specific programs that include "special units of study, displays of artifacts, multicultural fairs, and shaded faces in textbooks" (Stockdill, Duhon-Sells, Olson, & Patton, 1992, p. 23). However, these programs do not have lasting effect within the learning community.

Admittedly, most diversity programming in colleges and universities is often piecemeal and consequently ineffective. However, for better or worse, a fractional approach to diversity actually allows some institutional personnel such as appointed or volunteer faculty, staff and students, to commit significant time, sacrifice, and energy to implementing successful programming (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, & Bauman, 2003).

Currently, many colleges and universities design diversity programs only focusing on the admissions process (Chesler et al., 2005). In order to institute successful diversity initiatives, colleges and universities must realize that it is not enough to accept diversity initiatives solely focused on admissions because diversity is an issue impacting broader policies. Furthermore, institutions must be willing and ready to present "clear, consistent internal policies and practices" (Liu, 1998, p. 439). Merely focusing on recruiting a more diverse student body minimizes the possible constructive academic results that a diverse campus can provide (Humphreys, 2000).

Another challenge for diversity programming in colleges and universities is that of resistance: dominant groups may perceive the implementation of diversity initiatives as forcing them to accept differences and as endangering their access to quality educational opportunities. In fact, some scholars who have broad experience developing and implementing programs for diversity at their universities warn that colleges run the risk of creating even more difficult circumstances for students during the process of diversification because such programs sometimes create "friction and turbulence" and often makes "the experience of being a student more difficult" or even "alienating" (Nelson, 2007, p. 68).

Even though the possibility exists that diversity policies may actually create conflict and divisions, especially in the early stages of implementation, institutions must recognize that

persistence is necessary to produce results that will be eventually perceived as positive (Tierney, 1993). Implementation of integrated diversity initiatives in higher education has so far been generally unsuccessful because dominant groups feel intimidated and thus vigorously seek to uphold their privileged position (Bauman et al., 2005). Chang (2000) found that most colleges and universities are sincerely interested in implementing diversity policies but he observed that most are driven, more often than not, by unrest. Reaction to incidents on campus that indicate discontentment among students and faculty regarding issues of diversity becomes the genesis of revolution instead of a carefully-conceived and implemented mission and commitment to diversification. Chang views these efforts as a failure to see the larger purpose and proof that more work needs to be done in colleges and universities across the nation.

For these reasons, "leaders who seek to create a community of difference will have to develop an understanding of power and control and recognize the need to negotiate and accommodate norms and shared purposes of both majority and minority groups" (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003, p. 132). Efforts involving oppressed and marginalized groups should be connected with social justice and educational leaders must advance social justice principles that uphold diversity in order to transform higher education and society at large (Arocena & Sutz, 2005). Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta (2003) wrote, "supporting diversity in colleges and universities is not only a matter of social justice but also a matter of promoting educational excellence" (p. 126). Thus, finding the appropriate balance is crucial in diversity planning in institutions of higher education.

Smith and Parker (2005) concurred that the goals of many colleges and universities' diversity initiatives are simple: to increase admission and retention of underrepresented

students and to increase organizational competence and facility to address diversity effectively. And while there are significant distinctions in organizational framework and emphasis, there are also substantial overlaps in institutional objectives and approaches. Diversity is essentially at its core, all about action, albeit oftentimes consuming and difficult. It is geared towards righting the effects of previous exclusions. Thus, diversity initiatives are "transformational in nature because they challenge traditional assumptions about learning, but also other forms of privilege associated with learning" (Chang, 1999, p. 7).

Issues in Implementation

Tokenism. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities still regard diversity as a freestanding strategy, and believe that it can be put into practice while maintaining the status quo of the institution. To truly advance the agenda of diversity, Jones Brayboy (2003) stressed that institutions must move toward making a wholehearted commitment instead of simply hiring some faculty of color to implement diversity. He is worried that the faculty members who are hired to implement diversity are often undermined by hidden service requirements – going above and beyond what is expected of other faculty to gain tenure.

This issue of tokenism is merely emphasized when faculty (or scholars) of color are viewed simply as a symbol of the institution's dedication to diversity and when minorities are expected to implement diversity while White faculty are excused from such a requirement. Jones Brayboy (2003) observed that White faculty are "simply expected to be good teachers and scholars whereas faculty (or scholars) of color are expected to be good scholars and teachers and, in the process, to implement diversity" (p. 75). Another issue is some people's belief that only minorities should teach diversity courses. Faculty of color, according to Jones Brayboy (2003), should not be seen as the only ones implementing diversity because this will

only reinforce the viewpoint that they are filling special roles rather than vital members of the academic community.

Existing Structures and Policies. There seems to be only a small number of colleges and universities who are willing to restructure policies and practices around diversity. Part of the reason may be that institutions of higher education are "slow-moving, conservative institutions that simply do not change very quickly" (Schuman & Olufs, 1995, p. 253). Moreover, faculty and administrators may not support such initiatives because they have their own agendas.

Another reason why higher education is mired in the diversity crisis is because the issue has yet to be fully defined, and misconceptions that diversity initiatives are distinct and apart from the principal structures in higher education still need to be overcome. Colleges and universities often fail to think and function systematically and instead accept diversity initiatives as an optional extra—an informal and makeshift system that is not integrated in the core strategies and systems of the institution (Ibarra, 2001).

Additional common hindrances have become apparent among institutions seeking to do the work of diversity on campus. First, many fail to measure the progress of their plan throughout time and have limited ability to gauge its effectiveness or need for alteration. Second, there is a general disconnect between the diversity strategic plan and the overall university strategic plan. Third, only those assigned to the work of the plan for diversity invest in the plan for the long term. Fourth, institutions often treat diversity programming as a requirement to be fulfilled rather than as an agent for university advancement (Smith & Parker, 2005). These are just some of the reasons why diversity planning continues to be a difficult and challenging process in higher education.

Opportunities

Benefits of Implementation. Several reports issued by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) have emphasized the importance of implementing diversity initiatives. In defining diversity, the AAC&U (1995) writes:

> As educators we must address these basic challenges for American pluralism across the curriculum–in the classroom, in the co-curriculum, in the intersections between campus and community. In short, this diversity that is part of American society needs to be reflected in the student body, faculty and staff, approaches to teaching, and in the college curriculum. (p. 8)

It is critical for educators and administrators to keep in mind the chief motivation for implementing diversity initiatives in colleges and universities: its educational significance. Learners profit in innumerable ways from others whose outlook and experiences in life diverge from their own. A diverse learning environment challenges students to "explore ideas and arguments at a deeper level–to see issues from various sides, to rethink their own premises, and to achieve the kind of understanding that comes only from testing their own hypotheses against those of people with opposing views" (Orfield, 2001, p. 31). Burbules and Berk (1999) emphasized that it is the principal task of every educator to bring up issues regarding disparities and inequities and to examine how the perpetuation of oppression and inequality in higher education can only hinder much-needed institutional transformation. Hutchinson and Hyer (2000) advocated for a more inclusive framework for diversity that results in significant and meaningful movement away from the institutional status quo.

Implementing Integrated Diversity Initiatives in Higher Education. Institutions of higher education have historically faced challenges in creating and maintaining diversity

initiatives that deal with the destructive remnants of racism and exclusion as well as the changing demographics in student populations in campuses across the country (Hansen, Pepitone-Arreola-Rockwell, & Green, 2000). Many diversity proponents are concerned that diversity initiatives are not integrated into the central policies and practices of their institution of higher education. They recognize and emphasize that diversity should become a focus in institutional strategic planning activities or else diversity initiatives will continue to be viewed as trivial and at risk. Numerous researchers concur with this evaluation and propose that issues of diversity should pervade all areas of colleges and universities (Humphreys, 2000; Jones Brayboy, 2003; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). New approaches are therefore necessary to effectively tackle growing concerns about diversity and its accompanying issues. Implementing an integrated diversity initiative, however, is easier said than done.

Jones Brayboy (2003) found that diversity initiatives will most likely not succeed unless there is a commitment to integrate diversity initiatives throughout the levels and structures of the institution. He is skeptical about the idea of implementing diversity and questions this implementation as it relates to junior faculty or scholars of color as he fears that it will actualize the status quo and continued marginalization of diversity and faculty (or scholars) of color. He further highlights several important issues in implementing diversity, for example, the establishment of official diversity courses may impact the inclusion of diversity issues in other mainstream courses, which may communicate to both students and faculty that diversity as a topic is unimportant and merely peripheral.

According to Jones Brayboy (2003), institutionalizing diversity in higher education requires systemic change that "moves toward considering wholesale changes in their underlying structures and day-to-day activities, especially if they are truly committed to

refocusing the historical legacies of institutional, epistemological, and societal racisms that pervade colleges and universities" (p. 74). The process of institutionalizing diversity involves creating an inclusive campus climate and, in many cases, reframing an institution's purpose. For many colleges and universities, institutionalizing diversity goes against their standard operating procedures that are oftentimes rooted in the institutions' predominantly homogenous history (Kezar, 2008).

Although there has been extensive research regarding the value of having diverse student and faculty bodies and the advantages of a diverse and inclusive institution of higher learning, it is still uncertain whether diversity efforts in colleges and universities in fact generate positive results that are evident in the actions and experiences of students, faculty, and administrators. The proliferation of diversity trainings, workshops, and programs have done little to provide critical data on ''best practices'' that can impart valuable information on implementing diversity initiatives in colleges and universities (Muthuswamy, Levin, & Gazel, 2006).

Suggested Options. Research-based models for diversity planning, implementation, and measurement focus on an institution's ability to fundamentally change the university structure to meet the needs of a diverse learning community. An organizational learning model that emphasizes implementation and ensures progress by making modifications as needed is therefore essential (Smith & Parker, 2005). This process provides the occasion for university leaders to modify methodology and to correct problems with the institution's diversity plan as they become aware of the issues. Organizational learning is associated with an institution's principal work and must use assessment methods based on institutional data to promote ownership of the process and connect critical stakeholders.

Another viable option is to develop diversity strategic plans that can be viewed as best practice because they highlight the magnitude of diversity initiatives and create realistic goals that convey the significance of such initiatives to constituents, ensuring that diversity has a place in institutional financial and resource planning. Strategic planning is necessary to emphasize the importance of the task of diversification, to set goals that are both realistic and attainable, and to hold accountable those who are responsible for the implementation of a diversity initiative (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). Furthermore, an effective diversity strategic plan will play a strong role in a university's overall strategic plan and will lay the groundwork to achieve a healthy campus culture.

Summary

The task of implementing an integrated diversity initiative in an institution of higher education is a dynamic process rather than an immediate outcome and the work related to it is very difficult and demanding, ongoing and ever-changing (Chang, 2005). Political philosopher Stephen Macedo (2000) states: "At its best, talk of diversity…reminds us of the extent that the promise of freedom and equality for all remains a work in progress: only partially realized, only partially understood" (p. 3).

A study of diversity does not mean only finding out which groups of people are present in colleges and universities. Nor can it be unconcerned about the issues, challenges, and opportunities that the implementation of diversity initiatives may reveal (Smith & Associates, 1997). After all, in the study of diversity, whether the focus is on examining enrollment and retention rates or on the campus climate, different aspects tend to spring up. In essence, the relationship between identified issues and those that bubble up in the course of the

implementation process exhibits how diversity affects all areas of life in colleges and universities.

Diversity initiatives in colleges and universities should be about equality, inclusion, empowerment, and most of all, change. Diversity policies that are implemented well could lead to significant changes in who attends colleges and universities and what they experience on arrival. In essence, diversity policy is ultimately about "changing higher education as we have known it and about changing the society in which it is rooted" (Benjamin, 1996, p. 155). Renato Rosaldo (as cited in Musil, Garcia, Moses, & Smith, 1995) states,

> Educational democracy involves not only honoring other cultures in their unique integrity, but also working simultaneously with a diversity of human beings…We are all equal partners in a shared project of renegotiating the sense of belonging, inclusion, and full enfranchisement at our major institutions. Such renegotiations require time, patience, and careful listening. (p. 1)

Further investigation into how leaders have been able to embed diversity into the very fabric and foundation of colleges and universities will benefit those seeking to add practical and new ideas on this very important subject.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to examine and explore the experiences of members of the University's Task Force for Diversity in order to better understand their viewpoints and their efforts in drafting and presenting *A Plan for Diversity* (the University's proposed integrated diversity plan). By gaining a deeper insight into these members' experiences, this study provided insight into the process by which the University arrived at its current, though still unapproved, diversity plan and allowed me to explore and highlight the experiences of task force members with regard to diversity generally, and the diversity plan specifically, before, during, and after the two-year period that the task force was active.

There is a plethora of research regarding diversity, however, detailed and explicit research that investigates how a college or university develops and implements a successful, integrated diversity plan is very limited. Scarcer still is research regarding failed or unsuccessful initiatives. Because my goal with this research was to gain a more in-depth understanding of how the task force members perceived the process of developing and drafting The University's *A Plan for Diversity*, I utilized a qualitative research design from the case study perspective so that I could have opportunities to observe and interview the task force members regarding their experiences during the two years that the task force was active. Qualitative methods enabled me to address the research questions sufficiently and examine the complexity of participant interaction in greater depth (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

This chapter addresses the specifics of the research study including the participant demographic and site selection, data collection and instrumentation, data analysis and interpretation, as well as issues of representation, validity and trustworthiness, the role of the researcher, research ethics, and limitations.

Rationale for Utilizing Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research seeks to describe the quality of certain aspects of a phenomenon and understand how or why something is done. It examines complex situations in great depth and allows the researcher to state the problem, refine, and reframe the study in an ongoing, cyclical process (Schwalbach, 2003; Stringer, 2007). As such, qualitative research often leads down paths that produce new questions, require modifications in methods, and/or involve more data collection. Over the course of the research study, I have had to make adjustments to what seemed like every part of the process: questions, methods, and even approach. An example would be the follow up questions I posed to the study participants during focus groups and individual interviews after I had noticed that some participants needed more prompts and some questions needed more clarification. Another example would be the revisions to my main research questions as well as the conceptual framework and methodology I utilized.

Qualitative research strives to illuminate the experiences of study participants (Polkinghorne, 2005; Schram, 2006). Qualitative research methods are used "to understand…the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular sociocultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). Qualitative researchers approach data with careful consideration and

understanding, allowing both researcher and participants to find the research process meaningful and rewarding (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Meloy, 2002; Shank, 2002). Thus, qualitative inquiries are ideal for contributing to a greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes.

This research study and the data collection methodologies used were aligned with the characteristics and requirements for the paradigm of qualitative research because this dissertation studied the chosen phenomenon in depth while providing interpretations and highlighting the study participants' shared experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University. I also sought to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, the context from which their viewpoints were derived, and our mutual desires to contribute to the research process in meaningful ways.

By conducting focus group and individual interviews, as well as constantly adjusting the questions used in these interviews, I was more able to comprehend and appreciate the circumstances and the viewpoints of the study participants regarding their experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity. In addition, because of my role as a participant observer in the diversity planning process at the University, I was able to take copious notes and make extensive entries in my reflexive journal documenting not only the events that transpired, but also the questions, feelings, and non-verbal cues that I observed throughout the research process.

Case Study Approach

A case study is best defined as "an intensive study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of

similar phenomenon" (Gerring, 2004, p. 341). A case study is a "problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2002, p. 61). Case study research clearly bounds the object of study whereby the case is a single unit around which there are set boundaries. The case is a specific "phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Stake, 1995, p. 25). The bounded system or case is selected because there is a concern, issue, or hypothesis, or because it is fundamentally interesting and the researcher seeks to fully understand the phenomenon (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). By focusing on a single phenomenon or case, the researcher can uncover the relationship between the significant characteristics of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). For this particular research study, the case is one specific institution (the University) and its attempt in developing and implementing an integrated diversity plan.

Case study research, however, is more than simply conducting research on a single entity or institution. It is a research approach that allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings and is particularly useful when the goal is to acquire an extensive understanding of an issue, event or phenomenon in its natural context (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011). Because case studies can be used to explain events and/or phenomena in their everyday contexts and can help a researcher understand and explain causal links and pathways resulting from a new initiative, I was able to glean richer understanding and meaning from the study participants. Finally, case study research enables researchers to answer "how" and "why" questions as they gather data from a variety of sources and to use the unified data to highlight the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The case study inquiry relies on numerous sources of data requiring triangulation especially during the process of data collection and analysis. A case study design requires "detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61) and is often utilized to gain deeper understanding of the subject being studied and the meaning for those who participated. The focus of a case study inquiry is on the process, context, and discovery of meaning (Yin, 2009). By conducting a case study, I was able to delve into the diversity planning process at the University as well as into the participants' perceptions and experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity. I was able to utilize multiple data-gathering and analyses techniques over an extended period of time to discover and more fully comprehend the study participants' contextualized involvement with diversity at the University, particularly during their tenure as members of the Task Force for Diversity.

Case study methodology was suitable for this research study because the study of the Task Force for Diversity members' perceptions and experiences with diversity in higher education in general and as members of the task force at the University in particular, contained broad, dynamic, complex, and contextually sensitive data (Jacobson, Foxx, and Mulick, 2004). Through listening to stories and experiences of the members of the Task Force for Diversity, I was able to glean insight and a better perspective of the importance of the participants' unique role and position that helped create deeper meaning for this case study regarding diversity in higher education (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). After all, a case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning.

Phenomenology

The qualitative approach for this study is from the phenomenological point of view. Researchers in the phenomenological mode "attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular settings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 25). Creswell (1998) wrote that phenomenology "embraces the notion that reality is subjective as people inextricably connect objects with their consciousness of them" (p. 53). In fact, "there is no separate (or objective) reality for people. There is only what they know their experience is and means" (Patton, 2002, p. 106).

The primary methods of gaining deeper understanding of a phenomenon is through descriptions of it, in the person's own words or lived experiences (Probert, 2006). Creswell (2003) defines a phenomenological study as "describing the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about the concept or the phenomenon" (p. 51). For this research study, the phenomenon is the experience of the study participants during their two-year tenure as members of the Task Force for Diversity.

A phenomenological methodology was appropriate for this study because it enabled me to understand the participants and the meaning they ascribed to their personal and collective experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). By allowing the study participants to share their thoughts and experiences individually and, for some, with other members of the task force via focus group interviews, I was able to gain more context and significance regarding their personal as well as collective stories about their work as members of the Task Force for Diversity. Seidman (2006) finds that phenomenological or in-depth interviewing is an excellent way for the researcher to understand the attitudes of the participants because it can provide context to participants' behaviors and actions.

Phenomenological interviewing focuses on the "interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9) resulting in the researcher's understanding of data gleaned from the interview. In addition, Creswell (2003) describes the interview process as being an excellent tool to allow the researcher to understand a phenomenon or other experience without directly observing the phenomenon. The interviews I conducted with several members of the University's Task Force for Diversity confirm Creswell's statements. In fact, the personal accounts and experiences of study participants, gleaned through in-depth interviewing, provided the basis for gaining insight and understanding of participants' definitions, experiences, and the meanings they attach to the subject of diversity, in higher education generally and at the University specifically.

Research Questions

My primary research goal was to contextualize the experiences of the research participants, all members of the University's Task Force for Diversity, during the planning and drafting process of *A Plan for Diversity*. Another goal was to understand the common and/or shared perspectives among task force members regarding diversity in higher education. The research questions focused on the individual research participants and their personal understanding of diversity and how it impacted their contributions to Task Force for Diversity and to the University's proposed diversity initiatives. To ensure that the research questions were thoroughly explored, the transcriptions of the structured interviews and focus groups, along with the participant observations and document reviews, were reviewed multiple times using a coding process described later in this chapter.

Another expected outcome of this research was to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of issues surrounding the issue of diversity in higher education. Guided by the primary research questions listed below, I expect that this research study will inform the various stakeholders in higher education of the issues surrounding diversity initiatives and suggest some steps to develop more effective policy in the planning and implementation of diversity initiatives in higher education.

Specifically, this study focused on answering the following questions:

1. How do the study participants understand and experience the issue of diversity at the University?
2. How do the study participants experience the process of drafting and revising the diversity plan?
3. How do study participants perceive the final diversity plan? What do they describe as the strengths and weaknesses of the diversity plan?

Critical Theory and Role of the Researcher

Along with phenomenology, I used critical theory to guide my study. My choice of critical theory stems from my passion for social justice and from my lived experiences as an English-as-a-Second-Language, Christian, and Asian female student in institutions of higher education. Critical theory posits that there is an imbalance of power within all social organizations, including institutions of higher education (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006). Because organizational structures are created by the dominant group (oppressor) in society, the organizational structures will always benefit the dominant group in its reflection of the group's values, ideas, and ideals. Critical theorists see organizational structures as tools

for the transmission and reproduction of the dominant group's values in order to consolidate and hold onto power and control for members of the dominant group (Apple, 2005).

Griffiths (1998) found that research activities involving oppressed and marginalized groups are directly related to issues of social justice. Critical research, then, is intended as a response against the inequitable situations existing within the context of higher education. In fact, because of my interest in critical theory and social justice, my role as a researcher has a decidedly more purposeful tenor. In critical theory, it is necessary for the researcher to conduct research for the purpose of actively addressing the inequalities that are present in society. By conducting this particular research study, I hope to call attention to the power structures and imbalances that result in inequalities in higher education and challenge the misguided notion that diversity in higher education is a luxury that colleges and institutions cannot afford to embrace. By using critical reflection in all aspects of this study, from the choice of the research topic, to the design of the research questions as well as interview questions, to analyzing and interpreting data gleaned, I believe I was able to synthesize both theory and practice and produce meaningful research that will challenge the status quo and hopefully initiate change.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity. The role of the researcher in qualitative research goes beyond simply being an objective observer (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers bring possible biases and preferences to their studies. This research topic is admittedly a very personal one for me. I have done my best to carefully and consciously monitor my subjectivity so that it did not impair my judgment and affect the results of the study. I was intentional about recruiting trusted and objective peers and mentors to work alongside me as I journeyed deeper into understanding the University's efforts to integrate diversity initiatives.

These “monitors” were not afraid to voice their thoughts and opinions and to point out instances when I may have been unable or unwilling to see and hear anyone’s viewpoint other than mine. On the other hand, these trusted colleagues also alerted me when I attempted to err on the side of caution and sought to be “too informed” as I minimized (consciously or otherwise) my concerns regarding diversity at the University.

The balance between what participants say and how the researcher interprets the meaning of participants’ words relies on researcher subjectivity and reflexivity. By recognizing subjectivity, researchers acknowledge that all research is essentially subjective and that partiality can work itself into the research questions, research settings, and data analysis and interpretation. Qualitative researchers should not only acknowledge both the existence of and benefits of subjectivity, they should also explore or manage their biases through reflexivity (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Reflexivity pertains to the researcher’s awareness of self, allowing for self-reflection and clear identification of one’s position as well as participants’ contributions to the study (Rennie, 2004). As a female qualitative researcher who is using critical theory, I have routinely used reflexivity as a methodological tool to represent, validate, and question the data gleaned from this study.

Reflexivity contributes to knowledge production and requires the researcher to be critically conscious of how one’s interests and situatedness (i.e., gender, race, class, sexuality, position) influence all stages of the research process. Reflexivity results in research that questions its own interpretations with the aim of producing better, less partial research accounts (Hertz, 1997). Reflexivity then, involves ongoing self-awareness and self-evaluation during the research process in order to produce more accurate analyses of the study. Throughout the research process, and over the course of reviewing transcripts, analyzing and

making sense of the data, and in the numerous iterations of writing and revising this dissertation, I have had to consciously and purposefully consider how my own background and fervor for diversity may impact the study's findings.

Maxwell (2005) posited that even though it is impossible and unnecessary for a researcher to eliminate one's personal goals and concerns, it is imperative to have an awareness of how these concerns shape the research and to determine how best to deal with their consequences. The goal is not to suppress primary experiences but to raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process. Indeed, the objective is to "be open to recognizing how our own position both privileges and limits us" (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 10). Throughout the research process, I struggled with what I perceived to be unfair allegations from my committee members as well as other faculty and staff at the University that I was biased and had an agenda. I admit I took umbrage to what I deemed as an accusation that I was unable to be objective and that I wanted to "rock the boat."

As someone who has experienced discrimination, blatant racism, and disregard couched under the premise of equality, I am passionate about and committed to creating awareness and understanding regarding the importance and necessity of diversity. I believe that my personal experiences, background, and passion have inspired me to be deeply committed to studying the issue of diversity and in speaking out and making a difference in higher education. I failed to grasp that others may view my research study as something other than the result of my passion, good intentions, and the commitment to take the necessary steps to effect practical changes at the University. As a minority in every sense of the word, and an aspiring future educational leader, I was keenly interested in how institutions of higher learning develop, implement, and evaluate diversity initiatives. I viewed the University's

attempt at diversity planning as the perfect opportunity to learn about such a process and, perhaps more importantly, to learn from those who have been tasked with such an important undertaking.

Participant demographic information

Participants and Sampling Strategy. Purposeful sampling is a major tool in qualitative inquiry that utilizes specific criteria, such as a pre-existing condition, experience with certain phenomenon, or membership in a specific organization, to select individuals for a research project (Creswell, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). In this research study, I employed this technique by selecting participants who were familiar with the planning process for *A Plan for Diversity* (i.e., the members of the Task Force for Diversity). Because the task force members were already assigned to a specific group by virtue of their selection to serve in the Task Force for Diversity by the Chancellor, it made sense to select my research participants from this group. Moreover, no other group within The University would have been able to adequately address the research questions because the process and experience of diversity planning within the context of the task force was limited to these select individuals.

All participants in the focus group interviews as well as individual interviewees were part of the Task Force for Diversity at the University. There were a total of 46 members in the task force (students, faculty, and administrators) during the 2007-2009 academic school years. However, at the time of the interviews (spring and summer 2010), only 40 members were still working at, studying at, or affiliated with the University. In fact, all work of the Task Force for Diversity had ceased by the summer of 2009, even though there was not an official end to the work or disbanding of the Task Force for Diversity itself. With the submission of the

proposed diversity plan to the co-chairs of the Task Force for Diversity and then to the University administration, the work of members seemed to be complete.

I contacted all remaining members of the Task Force for Diversity in February of 2010 via electronic mail and telephone to invite each one to participate in the research study. In most cases, multiple emails and phone calls were necessary due to inaccuracies in email addresses, failure of members to respond, or just as an added attempt at reaching out to as many task force members as possible. My goal was to garner a response (either positive or negative) from every task force member regarding interest in participating in the study. Ultimately, exactly half (20) of the remaining task force members agreed to participate and were involved in either focus group or individual interviews. These participants were motivated to participate in this study to gather and receive feedback from each other regarding the status of the plan. Eleven task force members were involved in the focus groups and nine other individuals who were unable to participate in the focus groups but expressed interest in the study were invited to complete individual interviews. The faculty and administrators who participated in this study have been in the field of higher education between three-and-a-half years to thirty-five years, with the average length of stay at the University around 20 years.

The lay summary for the research study (Appendix A) along with a list of dates for potential focus group and individual interviews as well as consent forms were sent via email to the 20 participants. I also contacted each participant individually and sent them several documents, including the procedures of the interview process, as well as the research questions pertaining to the study. Finally, during the appointed date, time, and location, both researcher and participants were engaged in discussion regarding the research project, the consent forms, and the expected outcomes of the study.

Data Collection: Methods and Sources

I collected data using four different methods: participant observation (field notes and reflexive journaling), document review, focus group interviews, and individual interviews. I will explain my use of each method below.

Participant observation. Glesne (2006) encouraged qualitative researchers to utilize field notes and reflexive journaling to capture and organize thoughts, feelings, and actual events during the data collection process. The "primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher" (p. 55) is the field note , which is the basis for reflexive journaling. By continually writing in my journal and reflecting and evaluating my observations, thoughts, and experiences, I was able to enhance and expand both the research questions and the meaning of the data gleaned from all sources. Through reading, re-reading, and taking time to process my field notes and the attached thoughts, feelings, and reactions to those notes, I was able to more fully understand the study participants' words and actions.

Field Notes. Schmuck (2006) found that observations involve carefully watching and systematically recording what you see and hear going on in a particular setting. I utilized field notes during the duration of the research process, specifically during subcommittee and large group meetings as a participant-observer, and in focus group and individual interviews as the researcher. Field notes are a rich source of data and allow researchers to collect valuable information. That information includes participant demeanor, non-verbal communication, and other important factors that are not easily discernible while using other data-collection methods. Field notes served as my primary recording tool to capture descriptions, ideas, and reflections from interviews and from any documents related to the research study.

I maintained a notebook of field notes during the course of this study to record thoughts and observations related to my experiences as participant-observer of the Task Force for Diversity and my ongoing discussions and interactions with members of the task force, utilizing the written word to describe each step of the research process. These field notes contained my observations, thoughts, and feelings during and after each encounter, meeting, and/or discussion regarding diversity at the University. The contents of my field notes are a primary source and have helped me monitor my subjectivity throughout the research process by showing me other perspectives regarding diversity in higher education as I joined committee meetings and interacted with task force members.

Moreover, reviewing my field notes helped me reflect critically upon study participants' experiences and enabled me to theorize how my own experiences with diversity may be relevant to others. Ultimately, the field notebook was where I began and continued ongoing analysis of all data collected and it became, in essence, a compilation of my data and analysis and interpretation. Field notes are not "a fixed repository of data from the field but a reinterpretable and contradictory patchwork of perspectives" (Lederman, 1990, p. 90).

Reflexive Journaling. My reflexive journal provided detailed information such as when, where, and who was involved in the study, specific roles and actions of these participants, and how my presence and position as the researcher may or may not have impacted the situations and contexts of the research study. The research journal was also an essential tool for me as the researcher to engage in self-evaluation, alerting me to my own subjectivity and possible biases (Feldman, 2003).

During the course of this study, I have had to monitor my personal opinions regarding the lack of diversity in higher education and how colleges and universities should recognize

diversity's importance and invest as many resources as are needed to ensure that their institution "fix things." I have also had to struggle with my committee's use of the word "bias" and how I carried my own agenda into this study. Being reflexive and writing my thoughts and feelings about these situations allowed me to process, confirm, and crystallize, as well as assuage myself, that I am a passionate person with a very strong interest in a particular subject and I have no hidden agendas other than to seek to understand what transpired during the work of the Task Force for Diversity at the University. I also had frequent discussions with my committee, especially my chair, regarding subjectivity and objectivity, and how to balance my passion with what I have gleaned from the data.

Part of the reflexive process for me as the primary researcher included examining my relationships with the participants of my research, questioning my presumptions of knowledge and reality, and making my materials and methods transparent (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007). In practicing reflexivity regularly, I openly shared about my thoughts and feelings regarding the lack of diversity at the University with my committee as well as my doctoral cohort and tried to engage other people in the campus and the local community-at-large in discussions regarding the importance of diversity. Moreover, I actively sought to review and revise my research materials, including, but not limited to, the lay summary and the interview questions. Richard Winter (2002) wrote that a reflexive researcher should "actively remind the readers that the story has been created by him/her" (p. 150) so that readers see his/her way of writing. The reflexive researcher should also seek to be transparent by describing the material and methods used in the study.

Document Review. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that documents and external communication can be utilized as data sources and that document analysis can be

advantageous for a researcher because of the unobtrusive nature of this technique. With document reviews, researchers are able to access data at any time that is convenient, which may aid in providing additional insights that may not have been captured through an interview process or other data gathering techniques (Merriam, 1998). For the purposes of this research study, I was able to identify and utilize historical data from the University's strategic plan as well as products from the Task Force for Diversity, such as committee meeting minutes, to gain a deeper understanding of how *A Plan for Diversity* reached its current and seemingly final form.

Documents and meeting minutes from both committee meetings and the larger and complete Task Force for Diversity have been recorded and are available for the public's review. By reviewing and analyzing such documents, I was able to better understand Task Force for Diversity members' perceptions regarding diversity and the actions they took to contribute to the proposed plan. I also attempted to locate and review documents pertinent to previous diversity efforts at the University.

Unfortunately, the documents that the research participants have brought up as being crucial work-products from previous diversity task forces were either inaccessible, unavailable, or no longer in existence. Hence, the bulk of the review was focused on the materials from the "current" Diversity Task Force, including but not limited to:

- the invitation letter sent to task force members from the Chancellor that explained the purpose and mandate of the Task Force for Diversity;
- meeting minutes from each subcommittee detailing attendance and agendas for each meeting;

- reports from the larger group meeting minutes highlighting each committee's progress; and
- the "final" product as edited by the Task Force for Diversity co-chairs that was presented to the Chancellor for his review and comments.

Interviews. The rationale for conducting interviews was not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and most importantly, not to evaluate. Seidman (2006) wrote that "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). My goal in conducting interviews was to gain a better understanding of how the study participants experienced the process of drafting and revising the diversity plan at The University.

Focus Group Interviews. The focus groups were divided into two distinct categories: faculty and administrators. In keeping with qualitative research protocol (Yin, 2009), I used pseudonyms for the names of the research participants in order to maintain confidentiality. Focus group participants were assured before the interviews that they would remain confidential. Such assurances were meant to encourage their open and honest participation and discussion in the groups. Therefore, members were identified numerically (e.g., Focus Group Member #1) so that I could highlight certain important themes and/or points that were brought up during the interviews.

Each focus group convened in a private conference room in the library of the University. The duration of each meeting was approximately ninety minutes. I led the study participants through a total of ten research questions (see Appendix C). The result was robust group discussion about their backgrounds, perceptions, and experiences related to diversity. I also utilized additional clarifying questions to ensure that participants were able to narrow

their answers to their time as working members of the Task Force for Diversity. Following the interviews, I wrote in my reflexive journal to capture the interview setting, participants, and overall environment.

The level of interaction, cooperation, and partnership that occurred during the focus group and individual interviews provided me, as the researcher, an in-depth and first-hand understanding of how the different committees functioned during the active phase of the Task Force for Diversity. In fact, I was able to observe and identify various patterns and concepts from the interviews alone.

I selected the focus group interview as one of my main sources of data collection for this study because it provides a setting where people are "emboldened to talk" about a common topic (Glesne, 2006, p. 79) and because they are effective in gathering large amounts of data within a short period of time. Kleiber (2004) found that the focus group is particularly helpful because of "its potential for revealing socially constructed meaning and underlying attitudes" (p. 89). For this research study, I implemented two focus group interviews, each with different but homogenized constituent groups such as faculty and administrators who were members of the Task Force for Diversity.

The focus group interviews were approximately 90 minutes in length and involved a total of eleven people. Focus group participants read my lay summary, the Chancellor's letter supporting this research study, and signed consent forms allowing me to audio record the interviews and transcribe and share the results through this study. I believe I was able to glean, by these interviews, a more comprehensive and clearer picture of these members' experiences as members of the task force by how they responded to all of my guiding questions.

As many strong personalities as there were in the focus group interviews, it was interesting to note that not one person dominated the discussion and I did not have the need to redirect the interview questions to bring members back on track. Every person took their turn and there was very minimal interruption although there was robust and collegial discussion and bantering throughout the interview. Participants spoke at length about their time and experience within their subcommittees and while the process and end result for each subcommittee was markedly different, each person was more than happy to share their "takeaways."

Individual Interviews. Because diversity and "diversity initiatives" are not easily defined nor readily observed in the naturalistic environment, I also employed a method that allowed me to understand the phenomenon through indirect means. Creswell (2003) described the interview process as being an excellent tool to allow the researcher to understand a phenomenon or other experience without directly observing the phenomenon. Maxwell (2005) and Patton (2002) agreed that the best way to understand how a person perceives his or her experience is to use qualitative methods—such as the standardized interview—in which specific questions are used to probe into the person's experiences.

There are myriad directions from which a researcher can approach the lived experiences of people. They can examine personal and institutional documents, make observations, explore history, utilize questionnaires and surveys, and even review existing literature. However, if the goal is to understand the meaning people make of their experience, then interviewing provides a necessary, if not always completely sufficient, avenue of inquiry (Seidman, 2006). Thus, by employing this data collection method, I believe I have a firmer

grasp of each interviewee's personal experiences during their tenure as a member of the task force.

The initial data analysis of the focus group interviews assisted me in my preparation for conducting the individual interviews. Many of the probing and follow up questions I used during the individual interviews resulted from the data collected during the focus groups, which enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences during their tenure as members of the Task Force for Diversity. For example, when asked about their experiences with diversity at the University and specifically as members of the task force, several focus group participants tended to focus their responses mainly on interactions with minority groups. I therefore revised the wording of the question and added some probing and follow up prompts to underscore and reestablish that the definition of diversity for this study encompassed more than just one aspect.

I assembled research notes immediately following each individual interview so I could accurately describe the interview context and my thoughts and feelings about the interview. These notes were included as part of my reflexive journaling as well as in the transcription, coding, and process of data analysis. I also constructed notes during my reviews of these interview transcripts. These notes were used to elaborate on several themes that I highlighted in the transcripts; however, they were still in need of clarification before being categorized further.

With the consent of the study participants, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In addition to these transcripts, notes from the interviews and excerpts from my participant observations and reflexive journaling were coded and used for data analysis. I reviewed all the taped focus group and individual interviews and transcribed those

conversations verbatim over a period of approximately eighty hours. This process allowed me to engage fully with and to bring meaning to the data for the research while ensuring that the transcripts were complete. I also reviewed the interview questions, protocols, and interview notes to further clarify and understand each interview. I reviewed the transcripts numerous times over a period of four years, to review themes and sub-themes and to bring out new aspects of the data. I have been gathering, compiling, studying, and reviewing my reflexive journals, field notes, and any and all available document pertaining to the work of diversity at the University in the three years since the launch of the Task Force for Diversity and for four years after as I conducted interviews and analyzed all data gleaned.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of qualitative data is an essential process whereby a researcher uses data gleaned from various sources to develop hypotheses in order to generate new knowledge and theory. Data analysis consists of "examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining …evidence to address the initial propositions of a study" (Yin, 2003, p. 109) and "involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). During this process of data analysis, the volume of data collected is redacted and condensed significantly, allowing the researcher to identify and organize data into important patterns and themes to construct a framework for presenting crucial findings of the study (Johnson, 2011).

My initial analyses comprised of reviewing and recapping documents collected as well as evaluating journal entries, notes, and communication with task force members and other pertinent personnel from the University. I analyzed all my notes as soon as data collection

occurred to mitigate the problem of forgetting and not to have "unanalyzed field notes and transcripts pile up, making the tasks of final analysis much more difficult and discouraging" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 95). A more thorough and comprehensive analysis of all focus group and individual interviews was undertaken after all notes were transcribed and examined. My main focus in data analysis was to identify "relationships that connect statements and events within a context into a coherent whole" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 98).

In light of the research goals of exploring the experiences of the members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University, I have chosen to use thematic analysis whereby "coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps" is used for "further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). By using thematic analysis, I looked for patterns within the data and combined patterns into themes and subthemes that collectively tell a comprehensive story of the study participants' experiences (Aronson, 1994). In thematic analysis, knowledge is generated from themes that emerge during the coding process and the researcher begins the analysis of data with no preconceived ideas or categories but rather codes the data in order to "build a systematic account of what has been observed and recorded" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 86). Thematic analysis allowed me to identify themes across and within the narratives told by the participants and to begin to understand and draw conclusions about those experiences. My goal was to "categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret" what was "observed, heard, and seen" during this study (Glesne, 2006, p. 247) and not to oversimplify or make sweeping generalizations about an existing phenomenon that may or may not enhance the diversity efforts at the University.

As I read through my transcripts, field notes, interviews, and other documents looking for patterns and themes, I detected categories of narrative information that began to appear. I

made notes of each category as they appeared and coded the data accordingly. This time-consuming but necessary work of coding was accomplished by searching for words or phrases that reflect specific events or observations and that begin to repeat themselves throughout the data (Mills, 2007; Parsons & Brown, 2002).

After analyzing the transcripts, I created a list of all the theme-codes and sorted them according to frequency of use. Initial coded categories included:

- Apathy
- Futility
- Buy In and Leadership
- Communication and Follow Up

The analysis of qualitative data is an indispensable process where the researcher uses data to develop hypotheses to generate new knowledge and theory. During the process of data analysis, the volume of information collected is reduced, thereby identifying and organizing data into important patterns and themes so that the researcher is able to construct a framework for presenting the key findings of the study (Johnson, 2011). However, it is imperative that during the process of reducing data, the researcher does not minimize, distort, oversimplify, or misinterpret any of the collected data (Schwalbach, 2003).

During the more than three years that I spent analyzing and making sense of the data, I purposefully revisited the interview transcripts numerous times to look for alternative perspectives and/or meanings in the data. After all, analysis is meant to "convert a mass of raw data into a coherent account… to sort, arrange, and process them and make sense of their configuration… and to accurately represent the raw data and blend them into a meaningful account of events" (Weiss, 1998, p. 271).

Qualitative researchers have the responsibility of ‘‘understanding and absorbing the context of the situation or behavior’’ (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007, p. 416) and interpreting and illustrating the meanings of participants in their particular context. Moreover, the interpretations found in the following chapters should answer the research questions that were formulated at the beginning of this research.

Analysis and interpretation of data for my research purposes also hinged on critical theory as it relates to issues of inequality in higher education. The concept of critical theory and its historic roots as a tool for social critique of modern society serves to highlight the issue of unequal power distribution within society as well as problems with social injustice. Critical theory's framework challenges "dominant ideology that supports deficit theorizing" prevalent in educational administration and policies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 156). A major goal for critical theorists is to illuminate the imbalances of power, while creating awareness among the oppressed, in order to lay the groundwork for real social change.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Credibility is of utmost importance when conducting a scholarly study (Creswell, 1998). A possible area of concern in conducting qualitative inquiry is that of trustworthiness and/or validity. Validity, though most often associated with the quantitative paradigm, is equally essential in qualitative research although with a much different focus. Because qualitative inquiry involves the lived experiences of individuals, verification may also be an appropriate and acceptable concept as it implies that the methods used have the necessary rigor, while still preserving the individual's valid experiences (Patton, 2002; Maxwell, 2005).

Trustworthiness determines "the degree to which researchers' claims about knowledge corresponded to the reality (or the research participants' construction of reality) being studied" (Reilly, 2013, p. 1). Trustworthiness protects the consistency and the validity of research findings and attains a reasonable level of accuracy and consensus by means of re-examining facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted (Cho & Trent, 2006). Qualitative researchers often employ techniques that strengthen the trustworthiness of a study. These may include but are not limited to: establishing rapport and trust with research participants, using multiple data sources and triangulating the data from each, participant review of interview transcripts and interpretations of their stories, and the use of thick descriptions of the social context and setting within which the research is conducted (Moen, 2006).

A key way to ensure validity in qualitative research is by triangulation of data collected from many sources (Mills, 2007). According to Glesne (2006), "the more sources tapped for understanding, the richer the data and the more believable the findings" (p. 36). By reviewing multiple sources of information and through the data collection methods of participant observation, (including field notes and reflexive journaling), focus group interviews and individual interviews, I was able to draw on a richer source of information for analysis and have multiple perspectives from which to base my interpretations.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend member checking as a way to ensure that the researcher's interpretations of the data honor the meaning as intended by the research participants. Asking for participant feedback during the research process helps establish trustworthiness and serves as an excellent test to ensure that the researcher has achieved the desired balance between the participants' voices and the researcher's interpretation of the

meaning. Glesne (2006) and Hubbard and Power (2003) promote member checking wherein the researcher shares interview transcripts, observation notes and drafts with the participants of the study. This method of safeguarding validity and trustworthiness through member checks, or respondent validation requires testing of data, interpretations, and conclusions with participants from whom the data were originally gathered. Reilly (2013) described member checking very clearly when she states:

> Member checking allows participants the opportunity to correct errors and challenge what they perceive as erroneous interpretations. They provide participants with an occasion to volunteer additional or clarifying information, which may be stimulated by reviewing their contributions. These additions may deepen and extend the researcher's understanding and analysis. Member checks also afford participants the opportunity to assess the adequacy of the data and the preliminary results, as well as to confirm or disconfirm particular aspects of the data. (p. 2)

To ensure trustworthiness of this study, I circulated a final draft of my findings chapter to all 20 of the study participants to solicit their feedback. I sent two electronic communications informing them where the research stood and how their review and input on the document attached was greatly appreciated as it was necessary for me to ensure validity of the study. I sent follow up electronic communication after a few weeks to ensure that all the participants received the first two e-mails and to gently prod them into providing me with any and all feedback that they may have. In the end, I did receive some responses, most of which confirmed and affirmed the contents of the findings chapter. One participant pointed out that other task forces and initiatives at the University have been similarly unsuccessful due to a variety of reasons.

Another method of ensuring validity involves extended engagement and persistent observation that requires the practitioner to spend more time in the field, developing trust with participants, and observing patterns of behavior to the point of being routine (Glesne, 2006; Mertler, 2009). I was fortunate enough, during the course of the work of the Task Force for Diversity, to observe and interact with some of the members via small-group committee meetings as well as large-group task force update meetings. I was intentional about having extended engagement with the research process and with the research participants and therefore attended two large group meetings and six small group meetings over the course of two years.

Trustworthiness can also be increased by using "rich, thick description… that allows the reader to enter the research context" (Glesne, 2006, p. 39). For this research study, I had to regularly and clearly review and accept my biases and struggle with comments I heard with regard to my research topic. I worked hard to utilize consistently participant checking (during, as well as after interviews) to ensure that my transcriptions and interpretations of participants' lived experiences were accurate. I also practiced self-reflection throughout the data analysis process so that I was able to consistently note insights, make changes, see patterns, recognize exceptions, and implement adjustments as necessary (Schwalbach, 2003). Ultimately, I was able to utilize participants' experiences as well as my own reflections, to provide a representation (though admittedly partial) of the reasons why the University's diversity planning practice was flawed.

Finally, I presented evidence as to how the interpretations fit the data to establish the integrity of the data. I used direct quotes to exemplify the interpretations presented by my research and worked hard to retain the participants' uniqueness by using more extensive

quotes so that individual participant perspectives are emphasized (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Simultaneously, recognizing that I am responsible as the primary researcher to provide sufficient evidence for the appropriate balance between participant meaning and researcher interpretation, I made clear and conscious efforts to ground the participants' comments in context as it is an essential component of good qualitative research.

Representation

As the primary researcher, I understand and accept that these participants' perspectives cannot be considered representative of the rest of the Task Force for Diversity or even that of the University. I acknowledge that even though complex issues were discussed during participant interviews and there seemed to be consistency in responses, these results only convey partial truths from a small group of participants (Geenen, Powers, Vasquez, & Bersani, 2003; Trainor, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) posit that study participants are "seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why" (p. 31).

Even though some study participants were members of the same subcommittee, there were instances when they had differing recollections and reflections regarding what was said or done in their committee meetings. Representations are implicitly value-laden because people may interpret the same value in different ways in the context of particular cases (Cooper, Glaesser, Gomm, & Hammersley, 2012). Multiple conclusions can be reached on the basis of the same set of factual research findings, hence, researchers should not allow the data to stand by itself but acknowledge that what is gleaned is possibly only a snapshot of a bigger reality (Kuntz, 2010). I admittedly had to struggle with this aspect of my research the

most as I had initially wanted for the participants' stories to stand alone and represent the work of the entire task force. I wanted the participants to explain what went wrong in the diversity planning process and why the University was unable to adopt *A Plan for Diversity* even though the participants worked painstakingly to ensure that they submitted a thorough yet implementable document.

I now understand, because of my experiences during this research process, that even as well-intentioned researchers attempt to perform a thorough study, representation will always remain incomplete. Bussing, Koro-Ljungberg, M'Cormack-Hale, and Williamson (2008) call this "the tension between the desire to know and the limits of representation" (p. 341). It is therefore essential that I highlight the incomplete nature of representation as this study only contains data gleaned from less than one-half of the members of the Task Force for Diversity and embodies their version of the events that transpired based on their experiences and interpretation in interviews conducted at one point in time. I have been intentional and believe that I have done my best to allow the words of the study participants to "stand alone" even as I simultaneously realize and understand that their words cannot and do not give a complete picture of the work of the Task Force for Diversity or of the diversity planning process at the University.

Research Ethics

Ethical concerns are common when conducting research studies especially when it pertains to protecting research participants (Glesne, 2006). For this study, participants were assigned aliases to protect their identities and responses were redacted into collective generalizations. While broad descriptions were also used when referring to the identity of the

participants (e.g., an administrator, a faculty member, a graduate student) the specific title of the participant was not revealed so as to protect their identity and office and encourage them to be fully open during interviews. I took extra precautions to assure participants that any responses were kept secure and anonymous. I explained the process of data transcription and storage to each participant (i.e., I will be the only person listening to the tapes and I will have everything locked securely in a file cabinet in my home office).

When, even after taking these steps, there was still some concern because of sensitive information, I discussed with participants and my dissertation committee, as well as the Institutional Review Board, how to best handle the situation, and whether or not it would be wise to exclude specific information from the research report. In fact, my committee and I decided it was best to make the University anonymous, not only to protect the participants, but also to safeguard the University itself.

While there were no concrete benefits to participants as a result of this study, there were indirect ways that participants benefitted from being involved in the research study. Participation in this study allowed members of the task force to continue to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions regarding diversity initiatives at the University and the local community. Additionally, the occasion of meaningful discussions with others, especially in a safe space such as the focus group interviews, have enabled participants to adopt a more realistic yet hopeful stance to their outlook (Savin-Baden, 2007).

Limitations

As with any research study, this study has limitations and by acknowledging these limitations, I am more able to frame the context of the study, assess the methodology used,

and determine the practicality of the findings (Creswell, 2003). While I believe all the study participants provided their honest opinions during the focus groups and individual interviews, I am not able to guarantee that their opinions accurately reflect the opinions of all the other members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University.

Another limitation of this qualitative study is the that only half of the total number of the Task Force for Diversity volunteered to participate in the study and that upper level administrators did not respond to my invitations for them to join the study. Even though an invitation to participate in this study was extended to all the members of the Task Force for Diversity, only 20 individuals agreed to participate in the study. This study, therefore, only presents the views and experiences of the study participants. Yet another limitation is the fact that I could not access certain documents, limiting my ability to review materials that could have been an additional source of data for this study.

Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology for the examination and exploration of the experiences and values of members of the University's Task Force for Diversity in order to better understand their viewpoints and their efforts in drafting and presenting *A Plan for Diversity*. A rationale for utilizing a qualitative research and case study approach focusing on phenomenology and critical theory were presented as well as a section on representation, researcher role and subjectivity, a review of the research questions, and a presentation of the participant demographic information and methods of data collection. The main section of data analysis included data analysis and interpretation, validity and trustworthiness, research ethics,

and limitations. In-depth discussion of the themes and implications gleaned from the work of data analysis will be presented in later chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion of Findings

Introduction

This study was conducted to examine the experiences and perceptions of members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University in order to better understand their viewpoints and efforts in drafting and presenting *A Plan for Diversity*. By gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences, I hoped to gain insight into the process by which the Task Force for Diversity arrived at its proposed final draft of the diversity plan. By applying the lens of critical theory to multiple sources of data, I was able to complete a thorough and detailed exploration of emergent themes.

I interviewed 20 administrators, faculty members, and students from the Task Force for Diversity to learn about their experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity with regard to diversity generally, and the diversity plan specifically, before, during, and after the two-year period that the task force was active. The research questions, which were designed to learn about the role of the person, the process, and perception in participants' experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity, included:

1. How do the study participants understand and experience the issue of diversity at the University?
2. How do the study participants experience the process of drafting and revising the proposed diversity plan?

3. How do study participants perceive the final diversity plan? What do they describe as the strengths and weaknesses of the diversity plan?

To investigate adequately the research questions, I employed the following data collection procedures: 1) participant observation (field notes and reflexive journaling); 2) document review; 3) focus group interviews; and 4) individual interviews. The first part of this chapter is written mainly in narrative format and includes the background and history of the Task Force for Diversity and of the University itself to provide context for the interview data. A linear narrative is utilized to integrate and triangulate various data sources such as my field notes and interviews as well as document analysis.

My role as researcher and participant-observer is the perspective from which the narrative is penned. My goal is to take my readers on a journey so that they can feel the participants' experiences and understand their realities. The focus of this chapter, indeed of the entire study, is on the perceptions of the research participants and, while these participants were members of the Task Force for Diversity and speak from their context and experiences in that capacity, it must be stated from the outset that the findings in this chapter, and thus this study, contain only a partial account of the work of the Task Force for Diversity.

Background and History

In 2007, the University's Chancellor convened the Task Force for Diversity and charged the group to create *A Plan for Diversity*, with diversity defined in a comprehensive manner, covering attributes such as race/ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, spiritual values, creed, sex, gender identity and expression, political affiliation, age, disability, veteran status, and sexual orientation, as well as economic and educational background, geographic

location, and pedagogical systems. *A Plan for Diversity* drew heavily from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) initiative, Making Excellence Inclusive, along with a series of papers from the AAC&U that focused on helping universities embed diversity into the fabric of their institutions. As a result, the Task Force for Diversity established the following strategic directions for *A Plan for Diversity*: access and equity – employees, access and equity – students, campus climate, community partnerships, curriculum and research, and learning and development.

A Plan for Diversity in its final (though unapproved) form is a 42-page document that was created in 2009 and intended to be presented to both the University's Chancellor and The Board of Trustees later that same year. While it was presented to the Chancellor in December of 2009, it was never presented to the Board of Trustees.

Institutional Background. The University has had unique challenges in the area of diversity because, in addition to the racial and gender diversity initiatives that play a large role in the plans of other institutions, geography is a grand factor in the overall culture of the University and in the lives of the people who make their home in the same mountainous county. Anecdotes from University administrators provide a glimpse of why attracting students from other regions of the state, country, and world is difficult: its remote location, the snowy weather in winter that presents obstacles for those with physical disabilities, and the socio-economic status of many citizens in the nearby communities is quite low so affordability is often an issue.

As the school evolved throughout the decades of the 20th century, it remained committed to the community even as it expanded to university status with multiple programs of study. Starting in the 1960s, major institutions of higher learning in the United States began

to weave diversity initiatives into the fabric of their individual institutions. There was a realization that, in order to train students in a way that prepares them for work in a globalized society, universities must foster campus communities that reflect values such as tolerance, acceptance, and inclusiveness. Models for diversity efforts sprang up in institutions all over the country and strong leaders in this area rose up and became both well-known and regarded.

During the 1990s, the University was a strong regional leader in these efforts toward greater diversity. The school's chancellor was intentional and adamant about his commitment to these efforts and implementation of international education proved successful. A committee was formed to direct this effort and the University became more diverse over the course of a decade. Positions within the upper administration were created to oversee programs related to women and minorities. More people of color were hired to faculty positions. Need-based scholarships were established to aid students from impoverished and minority communities. A positive transformation was made in addressing and appropriately dealing with claims of sexual and work-place harassment. A culture of understanding and acceptance was fostered. The University was seemingly becoming a model for progress and change.

The early years of the next decade saw similar progress. The Office of Academic Affairs enlisted a diversity coordinator responsible for the integration of diversity initiatives within the university curriculum. An annual Diversity Celebration began and awareness campaigns to address the needs and concerns of diverse were populations implemented. Perhaps the most significant advancement during those years was a transformation in student recruitment. Students, parents, and faculty from underrepresented populations became ambassadors of recruitment by giving their time to visit high schools and make personal

contacts with potential applicants. The stated goal was to increase the number of minorities on campus by 10% over five years and to double the number of minority applicants.

The transformation of cultural infrastructure through the addition of leadership and diversity initiatives was heightened by a renewed charge by the chancellor to develop a new strategic plan that would expand upon the work that was implemented in the 1990s. During the first few years of the 21st century, a new chancellor was installed mid-decade and the work of diversity continued as it had before with shifts in institutional infrastructure and specific roles of every kind assigned to members of the administration. Advancements in equal employment opportunities, disability services, and practices related to affirmative action were made under the broad restructuring that transformed the university culture. A faculty exchange program was also established to bring instructors with many different perspectives to the campus of the University.

Birth of the Task Force for Diversity. In 2007, the new Chancellor called for *A Plan for Diversity* that would further advance the University to become a place that is reflective of the cultural shifts in the state and nation. Working with the premise that "diversity is the cornerstone of education," two assistant Vice Chancellors led the effort to move forward with existing initiatives while leading a Task Force for Diversity that would outline a plan in keeping with the Chancellor's wishes. Those administrators tapped into the spirit of the founders as they drafted their proposal outlining the work of the forming task force. A focused goal emerged offering meaningful thought about how an institution like the University should venture into the arena of diversity planning.

The Chancellor charged the Task Force for Diversity to create a blueprint that would enable the University to develop an "increasingly vibrant and inclusive living, learning and working community" and for the *A Plan for Diversity* (2009) to:

> Promote access; increase internationalization; prepare students to live in a diverse world; create an environment where diversity is woven into the fabric of the institution; focus on values that can't be learned solely from textbooks; promote respect and encourage open dialogue about differences with pride; and interface diversity with all other aspects of the campus life. (p. 13)

The Task Force for Diversity created its framework with a deep understanding that integrated initiatives are essential in enabling the University to become more diverse. Therefore, the task force studied and incorporated the University's strategic goals as well as its successes and challenges as it established six strategic directions for *A Plan for Diversity*: 1) Access & Equity – Students; 2) Access & Equity –Employees; 3) Campus Climate; 4) Learning and Development; 5) Curriculum and Research; and 6) Community Partnerships.

Task Force Members Feel Excitement, Pride, and Responsibility. As a participant-observer in the Task Force for Diversity, I experienced a sense of awe and pride in seeing such a large, diverse group of individuals come together in an effort to address the issue of diversity and plan for ways for the University to integrate diversity initiatives into the life of the institution. There was a palpable air of urgency, and responsibility, as the Chancellor gave his charge during the first complete task force meeting. I could see the eagerness and earnestness in the faces and eyes of many of the task force members, and I left that meeting hopeful and energized. I anticipated powerful, transformative results for the members, for the University, and even for myself.

In the beginning, the work seemed to go quite well. The fact that the Chancellor convened this group indicated to most that there was a strong intention to work toward enhanced diversity efforts at the University. Excitement and optimistic anticipation resonated among the members of the task force. Conversations proliferated regarding how diversity planning will help move the University to a better place. The task force members who called for such a group were particularly hopeful that systemic change could and would be effected as a result of their work.

The group itself was comprised of people who cared about and were invested in the task at hand. Each individual was thrilled that university leadership seemed to care as well and was showing support for the effort by truly investing in the process of change. This realization fostered even more hope among those who gathered to serve—hope that whatever change came as a result of their focused work might filter through the University and seep into the community surrounding the school. One physically-disabled individual on the task force was particularly heartened and pointed out key places around campus and in the community where wheelchair lifts or ramps would truly ease his burdensome commute. Others longed simply to see a university population that was more speckled with color and wanted to have the opportunity to learn from faculty, staff, and students from other cultures.

While the Task Force for Diversity, comprised of 46 faculty, staff, and students, met independently under the direction of co-chairs to complete their work, four significant programs were implemented to aid diversity at the University: 1) a program "to enhance the number of tenure-track faculty who have life experiences unique to underrepresented student and faculty populations"; 2) a program to provide low-income students with tuition assistance that allows them to leave college debt free; and 3) two additional programs called

"Diversity Scholars" and "Diversity Fellows" to assist undergraduate and graduate student diversification efforts by bringing academically-gifted persons from underrepresented populations to campus.

There was also a sense among task force members that a new line of two-way communication was strung to provide greater access to the Chancellor and to others who were in positions of authority. With two Vice Chancellors leading this renewed effort and effectively serving to liaise between the task force and those at a more senior level, participants anticipated that the work at hand would bear fruit. Everyone was looking forward to doing the work, submitting proposals, and receiving feedback. The Task Force for Diversity at large met twice within the first year of service and committee leaders gathered their members to meet in their own committees as well. The committee members met and worked in earnest to develop proposals for their assigned strategic area of focus and for the first few months at least, it seemed like there was momentum building and the University was on the cusp of a major breakthrough.

However, the excitement waned over the course of the next semester and the work became regarded somewhat differently. There was an issue of turnover: several committee chairs left the task force, which made continuity difficult for committee members. Furthermore, attendance within some committees was spotty, with several study participants complaining that some of their committee members only attended one or two meetings and then disappeared completely from the committee. There was dwindling participation evident from meeting to meeting, and a review of my field notes and committee meeting minutes indicates that attendance and participation throughout the term of the Task Force for Diversity's active phase significantly diminished with every meeting. One committee actually

had to stop meeting completely because the committee chair was the only member left to attend meetings. These issues with attendance and dwindling participation may have led to the perception that the plan was the work of only a few people and did not have broad-based participation, possibly contributing to the stalled process of plan approval.

Thinly-Spread Workers. As with all work in a collaborative environment, feedback came slowly, possibly due to both micro and macro forces at play within and outside the walls of the University. My field notes outline instances when some committee members with stronger opinions and specific agendas, as well as louder voices, steered their committees in a certain direction while the rest of the members either complied or attempted to encourage more discussion. While the blatant and sometimes aggressive maneuverings of such members did not result in overtly negative consequences, there were subtle yet obvious results, for instance, that of a committee chair resigning or of committee members becoming increasingly disengaged in the process. Ultimately, most committees delivered proposals reflecting their hope for diversity and their confidence in the University.

An expected one-year commitment to serve on the task force ended up becoming an almost three-year term. The work of the committees was lengthened because of the committees' desire to glean feedback from the co-chairs and from the Chancellor and other university officials as well. Each committee met separately over a two-year period according to its own schedule and developed its own outline and action plan. Because the Task Force for Diversity was never officially disbanded, members were uncertain if they were to remain in their roles. Because of the ambiguity of service, committee members became distracted by more pressing duties within the University and reprioritized their schedules. As a result, these committees became, at worst, non-functional and, at best, slow-producing. Still, the work

continued and the burden of time lapsed was overcome by the persistent hope for change that was felt among the members. Ultimately, the various committees submitted their work to the co-chairs, with the hope of seeing their proposals approved by the Chancellor and shared with the university community. However, the Task Force for Diversity and its resulting work *A Plan for Diversity* went largely unnoticed by those in the university community who were not part of the group and also by the local community-at-large.

A Change in Project Scope. A concern that came up with study participants was that the approach towards the diversity plan was all encompassing. Study participants stated that the goal seemed to be to cover everything from curriculum, to community outreach, to student learning. There were questions from Task Force for Diversity members about whether or not they were going out of bounds in their respective committees by discussing and proposing topics that may have been covered other committees. Each committee's role in the process was felt to be largely unclear. Moreover, study participants seemed to have different perspectives of what the whole charge was (in particular with curriculum and research), about what that charge meant, and to what extent Task Force for Diversity members could dictate to a faculty member what they should do or to what extent diversity should be part of the University culture.

After months of effort, each committee was issued a charge by upper-level administration to limit their report to two pages. This charge was disappointing to the group members who worked so hard to identify specific needs and outline plans for reform. Most of the committees had drafted multiple-paged proposals in anticipation of the submission deadline and were frustrated that they now had to determine which of their objectives and

strategies to cut and which to keep. How were they supposed to choose from equally important and essential initiatives?

The template provided by administration required each committee representing each strategic direction to have a vision statement, three objectives, and action steps corresponding to each of the objectives (ideally also under three), a three-year timeline, and a list of resources needed and persons/units responsible for successful implementation. Assessment strategies were also required. When all summary drafts were submitted to the co-chairs of the Task Force for Diversity, the work of the committees halted while the co-chairs and committee chairs awaited feedback from the Chancellor and upper-level administration regarding a final plan. They wanted to know their roles in the resulting implementation and to get started on the actual work toward implementing integrated diversity initiatives. The silence they heard from administrators made them feel like they were stopped short of their goal and they did not understand the reason why.

Study participants believe that people at the University might be surprised to see the proposed roles and responsibilities in the diversity plan. A study participant summarized that the task force's charge was to "come up with, identify an objective, goal, or whatever and to put down who's responsible" so committees took liberties and "assigned" tasks to certain people and departments within the University without consulting those people and/or departments. The consensus from study participants was that neither the Provost nor the "assigned" people had any idea what the committees were doing and most study participants believed that these "assignments" would generate unhappiness and create tension between the task force members and those people and/or departments.

When the comprehensive plan was completed by the co-chairs and ready for submission, it was passed up to senior administration leaders and scheduled to be presented to University Trustees in the last quarter of 2009. However, the co-chairs—the two Vice Chancellors who were overseeing the project—were not given the opportunity to present to Trustees and to begin the process of integrating the plan. Requests by the Vice Chancellors and task force members for an explanation failed to receive responses. Ultimately and partially related to the lack on traction of the diversity plan, both Vice Chancellors left the University to pursue other interests while task force members wondered if their work was in vain. Senior administration leaders remained silent about the progress. Any effort to revive or advance the plan by senior administrators was not understood or visible to the community and thus, senior administration was perceived to be silent and uninvolved.

In the two years since I concluded my research, the Chancellor of the University retired and a new Chancellor has been selected. As part of the Chancellor search process, a survey was sent out to students, faculty, and staff listing the University's priorities. Diversity was not identified as one. There is currently a new committee being formed to address diversity, but more telling are the meeting minutes from the University's planning council affirming the study participants' stories and experiences: Top university officials do not want to do yet another diversity plan because there have been several diversity plans that were never implemented. While there is recognition of the need to do something, there is increasing skepticism that any diversity plan will ever be completed at the University.

To date, there still has not been a formal disbanding of the Task Force for Diversity. Letters that were intended to close the task force were never sent out nor has an official status of *A Plan for Diversity* been shared with members of the task force and the community-at-

large. The status of the diversity plan, according to a senior university administrator, is "accepted but not approved." An informal conversation with a senior administrator at the University confirmed the findings of this study and affirmed the study participants' stories and experiences. This senior administrator believed that there were some at the University who thought the diversity planning process and the resulting diversity plan went too far—that it was too radical and this may have contributed to why the plan was not approved and adopted. As a result, *A Plan for Diversity* is not expected to "go anywhere."

A Change in Personnel. The Task Force for Diversity was widely viewed as being unwieldy due to its size. The Task Force for Diversity was in effect a "very, very large committee and so was only able to move very, very slowly" (study participant). Most study participants agreed that it definitely was the largest task force on which they had ever served at the University. Due to its size and the nature of the work to be done, it fell mostly to the committee chairs to do the bulk of the work. However, several participants questioned whether or not some of the committee chairs actually understood what they were undertaking and the time commitment that would be required to complete their task. In fact, one participant quipped, "I think some of them were drafted and didn't have the foggiest [idea] about what time and effort could move it forward."

In addition, personnel turnover plagued the work of the task force. Committee chairs rotated through their positions making for poor continuity. Attendance was poor at meetings, leaving the bulk of the work in the hands of just a few. Also, the enormity of the task became overwhelming to some, such that various areas were either not dealt with at all or were dealt with by more than one committee as a "blurring of the lines" occurred. Boundary issues also surfaced when some task force members became unclear and uncomfortable with their role in

possibly prescribing curriculum changes and inserting those changes into an individual professor's classroom. Ultimately, some study participants felt that the charge to the Task Force for Diversity was too ambitious, especially given the limited or lack of resources and support that was provided.

Perhaps the biggest blow to the group was the exit of both task force co-leaders from the University team. With work to senior administration leaders submitted, both Vice Chancellors who inspired the development of and led the work of the task force left the University to pursue other interests. A widely-perceived reason for their departure was the lack of traction of their work in the Task Force for Diversity. At that point, the frustration the members felt with the process increased. Without these leaders in place to continue their work and to persuade senior administration leaders toward the goal of full implementation, members felt that their efforts were futile.

Members lamented the fact that they believed their portion of the work, as well as the work of the other committees, had been lost. They were never given the opportunity to see how their piece in the task force puzzle fit with the others' pieces to provide a full picture of change. They felt a kind of unresolved loss, especially because the final form of the plan was never made public. One participant stated, "It would have been great to see what the other committees came up with and how our committees' hopefully complemented each other's work." The members could only speculate as to the state of *A Plan for Diversity* or its potential for usefulness if adopted.

Status of the Plan. Although the study participants believed that they were able to make significant contributions to their committees and to the larger task force, they seemed to not have a clear understanding of what was eventually sent on to the Chancellor and the

University administration. They believed that the co-chairs of the Task Force for Diversity were charged with "distilling" (participant's words) the plan even more, to the point where each goal/initiative was whittled down to just one or two pages.

The "distilled" version of the diversity plan was never shared with the campus community or even with the members of the Task Force for Diversity, at least not to the knowledge of most of the task force members who were interviewed for this study. During the interviews, study participants stated that they believed some form of the plan may have been shared with some deans at the University but most of the participants in this study have no idea if the plan has been accepted or rejected. Informal conversations with senior administrators and those "in the know" suggested that the plan was revised but was never officially posted on the University website for comments as originally intended. Participants of this study also believe that some committee chairs may have been presented with drafts and/or bits and pieces of the diversity plan by the co-chairs and by upper-level administration but, because the committees never actually sat down and talked about it as a larger group, the uncertainty has created some tension among group members.

Another study participant stated that "in general, things on campus need to be vetted so that people can feel like they've had the chance to provide some input before it's signed, sealed, and delivered" and that most of the other initiatives that are developed at the University are actually drafted and presented to the campus community with responses both invited and welcomed. Because this usual standard procedure did not occur for the diversity plan, some study participants expressed concern that many campus community members, even some task force members, were displeased regarding how things were handled.

Informal conversations with task Force and non-Task Force for Diversity members who were familiar with the most current status of the plan from 2008-2012, which were conducted as an additional source of data and were recorded in the researcher's reflexive journal, yielded very little new information: the diversity plan was believed to be still "shelved" and was not going to be adopted and/or adapted. Task Force for Diversity members bemoaned the fact that they had no closure insofar as they have never received notice that their work has been officially completed. In fact, it seemed like there were competing narratives about the development of the University's diversity plan and even though participants primarily voiced the themes found in this chapter/study, they are aware that there may be narratives that do not appear in their responses (i.e., other task force members who chose not to participate in this study may have other viewpoints).

Finally, a web search I performed gleaned a red-lined version of *A Plan for Diversity* that contained minor edits to grammar, form, and punctuation with the only major revisions to the proposed strategic directions evident in the timeline: target dates (e.g., spring 2012 or April 2014 were changed to "ongoing, in process, or TBD"). After being edited by senior administrators, this version of the plan was also not adopted.

An Unexpected Guest. During the course of this study the University brought in a consultant to help sort through the diversity process and support leadership for diversity. The consultant was widely-viewed as the University's follow up effort. With the plan being "shelved" the University may have wanted to continue the momentum brought about by the task force and gain support from leadership via a retreat led by the consultant. Some participants expressed concern that the consultant may have caused more confusion by virtue of his role and task and suggested that the consultant's primary role may have been to discern

how to put a "face" on a champion for diversity issues. An important question in the participants' minds was: Who would be the person within the University to take the lead in continuing the discussion about diversity?

Informal conversations and interviews with University administrators regarding the role and resulting work of the consultant yielded very little new information other than that the consultant was a well-respected higher education administrator in a prestigious university who was invited to visit the University twice during the spring and summer of 2010 to have discussions with select personnel from the University regarding the general topic of diversity. These administrators who dealt directly with the consultant said that he was less concerned with the adoption and/or implementation of the plan and was, instead, intentional about communicating the message that the University needs administrators who are invested in and dedicated to the issue of diversity. The consultant conveyed that this commitment by administrators was an essential first step in the process.

Major Categories, Themes and Sub-Themes

The data gathered from all collection methods revealed two broad categories highlighting four recurring themes and several more sub-themes related to diversity efforts at the University as indicated in the table below. The first category of emotional and psychological responses contains two themes. One theme was the feeling of apathy, whether personal, environmental or institutional. A second theme of futility was expressed by almost all of the focus group and individual interviewees. Sub-themes of hopelessness and helplessness also emerged as participants experienced a cycle of faculty, staff, and students who came and went during the process.

The second category of practical application and responses contains the theme of buy-in and leadership. This addresses how diversity initiatives need to have commitment from board of trustees and administration, as well as clear communication and follow up throughout the diversity planning process. These themes and sub-themes are expanded in the following section by using data gathered through the focus group interviews, individual interviews, document review, and participant observation and reflexive journaling. I have decided, when appropriate, to include entire sentences from participant interviews to ensure that the spirit and the meaning of the participants' words remain intact.

Table of Categories, Themes, and Sub-themes

Category	Themes	Sub-themes
Emotional and psychological responses		
	Apathy	*Personal Apathy* *Institutional Apathy* *Environmental Apathy*
	Futility	*Frustration* *Disbelief* *Helplessness and Hopelessness*
Practical applications and responses identified	*Buy In and Leadership*	*Commitment from:* *Board of Trustees* *University Administration*

		Faculty, Staff, and Students
	Communication and Follow Up	*Lack of:* *Access to Chancellor* *Communication with Task Force Members* *Follow-up regarding the final plan*

Emotional and Psychological Responses

Feeling of Apathy. Apathy happens when people disassociate from change efforts or become indifferent to protect themselves from failure. Cynicism implies that people believe the organization is not honest, fair, or sincere in its change efforts (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). Both apathy and cynicism cause people to pay lip service to any change effort but in reality only contribute minimally, if at all, to provide the illusion of support (Thomas & Plaut, 2008). It is natural for people to become distrustful of change efforts if they have failed to meet expectations in the past (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelley, 2006). task force members who participated in this research project reflected on their perceived experiences with cynicism and apathy about diversity and change at the University and the local community.

Personal apathy. Research participants lamented the fact that some subcommittees ended up being non-functional because the members disappeared one by one, especially in the

wrapping-up phase when it was more evident that nothing was going to be done with the work into which they had put so much effort. In fact, Focus Group Member #4 stated:

> It just seemed like we got to the point where we just stopped working...and I saw my committee literally shutdown...and I wondered if they felt like whatever they said would make a difference or I felt like maybe they were giving up or if they just thought that it wasn't going to matter.

Indeed, a review of committee meeting minutes and my personal journal and field notes from those two years showed a steady decline in attendance for at least one of the committees. The momentum seemed to slow down during the spring of 2009, when the committees were first advised to pare down their strategic directions to two pages. The directive to limit their work and the committees' gradual decline raises important concerns and questions about the University and the committee members' commitment to diversity.

In addition, there were those, like one committee chair, who seemed to be a committed and active member of the task force; however, when the chair received the invitation to join my study but realized that my research project was not an "official" function of the task force, s/he refused to participate or to continue to respond to my emails or phone calls. This chair's response, along with a few other noncommittal responses, as well as my personal observations of interactions as I sat in on some of the committee meetings, give the impression of a committee culture in which many members were investing in ways that met the minimal requirements (i.e., attendance of meetings) as a member of the task force.

Another participant brought up the fact that after two years of working on the diversity document some Task Force for Diversity members could not clearly articulate the task force's approved and adopted definition of diversity, showing, in her mind, overt apathy for the

process and minimizing it for others who were invested in the effort. This inability to articulate the task force's definition of diversity may be due to the intentional but possibly overeager desire to be inclusive of everything that is perceived to be "other," resulting in a catch-all description that was difficult to verbalize. As one study participant stated, "It just seems to me that we are describing what humanity should be about." Indeed, during my involvement as a participant-observer in the Task Force for Diversity's many committee meetings, I witnessed numerous members struggling with the definition of diversity. Many seemed to focus on race and culture and on differences rather than on those characteristics that drew on similarities and inclusiveness.

A source of frustration for the co-chairs and committee chairs was that of task force members not paying attention to communication and/or documents circulated via email and then claiming they never received it. Study participants demonstrated this point when they stated during focus group and individual interviews that they don't know the status of the plan because they "never received anything about it." The perceived institutional apathy towards the work of diversity appeared to catch up with these task force members, dampening any momentum for diversity to take deeper root at the University.

Institutional apathy. During both focus groups and individual interviews, study participants expressed strong sentiments about the University's perceived apathy regarding the Task Force for Diversity, the proposed diversity plan, and the future of diversity at the University and the community-at-large. One participant used the word "smokescreen" to describe the University's seeming indifference in pursuing diversity. An example referenced to highlight this observed apathy was the University's annual day-long Diversity Celebration.

A study participant held up the event as an example of apathy toward diversity at the University on all three levels (personal, institutional, and geographic):

> I know that there was a celebration in the Student Union a week or two ago—I get all the emails and I saw all the things but I never heard a single person say anything about it. It wasn't good, it wasn't bad, it was just…non-existent….There's this perception that, 'well they'll take care of themselves.' If you're diverse, or you'll just go and do your own thing and we don't have to worry about that and whatever minority population you might belong to you have your own little group and go ahead and do that …the university doesn't celebrate diversity like it maybe should. That it's sort of over in the corner and we sort of put it there and it'll sort of take care of itself and we have a lot of bigger things to do than to have to worry about that.

Indeed, in my field notes regarding the Diversity Celebration, I observed that most of the participants seemed to be mainly diverse "others" and that the attendance for the activities, especially the workshops, was sparse. In reviewing my notes, I found that there were enough advertisements regarding the event via email, posters, and newspaper articles, and yet somehow, the level of attendance and participation was still quite low. In fact, in some workshops, the number of attendees could be counted with just one hand.

Focus Group Member #11 made a similar observation and said:

> I think, especially on faculty, there are constraints on our time, constraints on our research commitments, constraints on all this have just added to our workload so much more than we used to have that we've had to give up some things and that's just such a low priority in relationship to what we actually have to do that it does get pushed over to the side. So, to me, it's just completely off the radar, there's no

> discussions, there's no interest, there's no celebration, but it's not badmouthed either. It's just off the radar. It's just sort of as if it's non-existent and it'll just take care of itself is how I sort of perceive that.

Environmental apathy. Another sub-theme that arose from among those who were interviewed was that of geographic frustration or what I termed environmental apathy. In response to a question regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the University with regard to diversity, participants stated that the University's geographic location, cost of living, the area itself, is a definite weakness because it is difficult to attract students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Some study participants shrugged this sub-theme of environmental apathy off saying, "It is what it is." Focus Group Member #3 stated:

> We are just not going to get certain people to come up here and live in snow or ice - we have to take what we have but I think as a university we need to be open-minded and we need to be accepting. We need to be embracing—and the community is and this university is—and I think if we go by that we get very high marks in that area.

However, Interviewee #3 pointed out that a constant and real complaint from minorities that he named "diverse others," is the lack of places near or on campus where their needs may be met (e.g., hair salons specializing in "black hair," restaurants with ethnic foods, clubs and other minority-focused organizations on campus). The interviewee also noted the absence of a social structure in the local community that would make these "diverse others" feel welcome and comfortable. Although these individuals were accepted formally into the University, they soon realized upon arrival that they did not fit in and soon did not really want to be there.

Physically disabled individuals are particularly frustrated with the area. The rugged and hilly terrain makes it difficult to navigate the campus. While ramps and elevators are readily available in campus buildings, it is nevertheless a challenge to climb the steep ramps and plot a course that allows them to move from one place to another quickly. Such individuals are required to drive from place to place and, often, it is difficult to find parking in direct proximity to their destinations.

Research participants who discussed the issues of access (one of the subcommittees was actually focused on this subject) at the University were quick to admit that it is very difficult to make any headway with this topic. Even though the University does not break any Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws, it does not go above and beyond to provide physically disabled individuals with easier access to its resources. Study participants pointed out that as much building and growing as the University is doing, it should at least do more to provide for this special population's needs (i.e., providing more dedicated parking spaces near buildings, equipping more buildings with handicapped ramps and access, etc.). The perceived lack of regard and inaction is another symptom of perceived institutional and environmental apathy.

Indeed, there is overwhelming consensus among study participants that the community where the University is located is entrenched in a homogenous way in terms of culture and that:

> We have to work in a long term process to make some changes in that but along the way we've got to become much more tolerant amongst all cultures and that has to be a part of the educational process, whether it's in the classroom, among faculty and staff, and all those groups. (Focus Group Member #1)

Education, after all, is more than just academics. Additionally, "we need to be conscious of the fact that it's going to take a long time…it's something that's not easy to implement very quickly, particularly since we're in this mountain region that is entrenched in its own way." (Focus Group Member #6)

Another matter of concern that came out of the student focus groups was that the University itself is "kind of like an island…while students of diverse backgrounds do face some hardships on campus, those are nothing compared to what they face in the town and the larger community." Participants were shocked and appalled to hear of stories from the student surveys and focus groups about town police pulling over Black faculty and students for no apparent reason other than the color of their skin. One participant stated "that to me is something that needs to be addressed and shows how we are still a long way away from being diverse and inclusive."

Futility. Most of the study participants stated that their current knowledge regarding the status of the diversity plan is that the plan has been "shelved." The participants believe that the Chancellor has neither reviewed it, nor has the Board of Regents seen it. Some study participants shared that they had been told not to talk about the diversity plan with colleagues or anyone who asks, but to simply deflect and/or deter any questions regarding both the process and the final product. This directive was confirmed by committee chairs who agreed to participate in this study. These participants, though very concerned about potential consequences for participating in this research study, grudgingly admitted that they had been personally advised by upper-level administrators not to speak of the work of task force to anyone. Individual interviewee #7 stated that:

> Most task force members are feeling jaundiced about the whole process because they spent inordinate amounts of time over the past two academic years on the committees and the task force in general, and to come out without an understanding of the end result is simply unacceptable.

Frustration. Every research participant of this study believes that the diversity plan that was the product of two years of work by the Task Force for Diversity is "dead in the water" because it has been at least two years since there has been any mention of it and, as one participant put it, the "longer the time goes with these types of things, the longer it goes where it's not," meaning he does not expect the diversity plan to go anywhere. One participant admitted that two years after the work of her sub-committee began, she was finding difficulty recalling parts of the plan; she said, "I'd have to go back and reread and refresh my memory."

Several of the study participants verbalized their worry that the diversity document and diversity efforts are in jeopardy because the co-chairs of the Task Force for Diversity—widely viewed as the two driving forces behind the Task Force for Diversity and the University's diversity efforts— are no longer employed by the University. Without these two advocates leading the charge, participants fear that any conversation, let alone initiatives about diversity, will be put on hold, or worse, disappear completely. Adding to the worry that the task force's efforts were in vain is the fact that many members remember a similar university task force, convened ten years before, which did not produce much fruit. In fact, none of the members could articulate what the end product was or where the final document could be found for reference. As the primary researcher in this study, I attempted to locate copies of the documents through various methods (i.e., conducting a library search, inquiring to specific departments and offices, and by contacting individuals who were involved in the former task

force) and was ultimately unsuccessful. Furthermore, no one could identify any of the initiatives that were proposed and/or implemented based on that task force. Therefore, a constant and consistent complaint about this Task Force for Diversity was that "we've already done this and nothing substantial ever came of it" and so many were afraid the very same thing would happen to this task force. Almost all of the study participants expressed frustration and displeasure that their hard work seemed to be tossed aside, rendering their efforts futile.

During the course of this research study, I was able to review the Task Force for Diversity's meeting minutes, agendas, and committee notes. Some committees appeared to be more well-attended and productive than others, but all committees seemed to take the task-at-hand seriously, albeit somewhat delicately. There was evidence, based on the number of times that committees met, and the attendance at these meetings, that members were intent on drafting and submitting a comprehensive plan that would move the University forward on its path towards diversity. It is reasonable and understandable then, that after two years of being active members and contributors on the Task Force for Diversity, that the study participants would express disappointment and frustration that the final diversity plan has not been adopted as a working document by the University.

Disbelief. "I think there's a fatigue and I think that will be a national movement that you will see across campuses; but there's a fatigue with the word diversity…because it's a lot easier to just at least believe and be able to verbalize that we have already gotten there," said one participant. Several expressed disbelief that the University committed the time and energy of the members of the Task Force for Diversity only to pay it lip service. Still others wanted to continue to try to make a difference but felt helpless as to what to do next and who to

approach to begin conversations about next steps towards diversity planning. Focus Group Member #2 shared:

> Maybe I was naïve but that [making a difference] was always my thought and the thought of my subcommittee, is that we need to write this and we need to write our suggestions based on our belief that it [the diversity document or plan] would be implemented…I always had the assumption all along that once this was on paper, once this was written down that it would be implemented. It really is odd to me that you would spend two years creating this document and then saying 'well it's no good because we didn't take it seriously' or 'gosh, now that it really is going to be implemented, now we gotta redo it'…it's not right and it is frustrating that after all our hard work and after we had taken it very seriously that it would be implemented—that we find out that it would actually never see the light of day.

Having spent two years as members of the Task Force for Diversity, many of the study participants were fatigued, especially in light of the fact that their hard work seemed like it was all for naught.

Hopelessness and helplessness. A review of diversity efforts at other universities shows that diversity change usually follows a nonlinear course and may have to undergo several incarnations, regressions, and even failures before it can begin to take root and gain momentum (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004; McKinley & Scherer, 2000). Most of the study participants agree that while important, diversity in higher education, especially at the University, is difficult to move forward as an agenda due to the sheer size and effort it would require to gain attention and develop momentum. Focus Group Member #4 believed that "diversity crosses all areas of the university, from Human Resources and the physical plant, to

faculty to students" and that administrators should understand that "the thing that makes it so important is also the thing that makes it challenging." Indeed, like many other things in life which are valuable but difficult to attain, the work of diversity can be similarly demanding but is essential in the work of higher education.

One study participant, Focus Group Member #8, pointed out that:

> There have been some major improvements at the University throughout the years with regard to diversity, although I still think we have structural aspects in place in higher education that do not favor diversity, that favor all sorts of lack of diversity including in faculty research, in faculty appointments, and at the University in particular I am concerned about our kind of 'start and stop approach' to diversity, which is really quite frustrating and disheartening.

Other participants agreed and pointed to the number of diversity task forces that the University has had in the past (specifically, three in the last 15 years) and how during and in between the span of these task forces, diversity was put forward as a major administrative priority and then after only a short while was removed as a priority within university initiatives.

Focus Group Member #6 likened the university to a really big wheel that turns very slowly so that the inertia required to "make something move is just incredible." Moreover, he stated that the University is a "pretty thin organization" and that:

> There's a lot of competing things for our time, a lot of different issues put on us by the state, federal regulations, state regulations, budgets, weather, growth programs, we have all these other distractions that are hitting us all the time and to be able to focus on one issue for a long time, to be able to put all that inertia into change, into that big wheel takes a lot of effort.

Another participant shared, “I don’t know what else we could have done…it seemed like we did everything we were tasked with and then some and now to not have anything to show for it.” One committee went so far as to reach out to the University’s peer institutions because they wanted to see what others were doing and was glad to report that the work that the committee put out was detailed, organized, strategic, and goal-oriented. However, committee members felt that “upper administration” wanted two pages, and two pages only, from each subcommittee because they thought that’s what they needed to do. Study participants stated “that’s hard because if you are trying to honor everyone’s work and your committee and especially if you are talking about diversity because you are covering a lot of bases…it’s really quite impossible.” The frustration and feeling of futility felt by study participants was palpable and compelling.

Focus Group Member #1 lamented about the failed process:

> This is exactly the reason why people don’t do this, because they do all this work and they never see the light of day and it’s really hard to convince someone that their work is going to be looked at when this kind of stuff happens.

Once again, the overwhelming sense of isolation that undergirded the study participants’ feelings of helplessness and hopelessness only seemed to highlight the sense of futility in their work as members of the Task Force for Diversity.

Practical Applications and Responses Identified

Buy-in and Leadership. Another theme that emerged as study participants discussed and shared their vision for diversity at the University and what they believed was essential for such an initiative to be successful was that of stakeholder buy-in and the importance of

leadership. Study participants expressed the need for diversity initiatives at a place like the University to have a top-down approach that requires commitment from the board of trustees to administration, to faculty and staff, to students. Focus Group Member #7 stated:

> I think a weakness in terms of diversity is that we have not had a unified administrative commitment for diversity…you know, the folks that are charged with making it happen need to have tremendous support and the world needs to know that diversity really matters to the leadership of this University… and some people will say that you can't mandate things; however, if you talk it and you walk it and you put money there, [then] it will happen because people will know it's an important part of the fabric of the University.

There are myriad studies emphasizing the need for senior management to take the lead role in diversity initiatives. In fact, diversity advocates insist that diversity initiatives cannot succeed without executive buy-in, involvement, and accountability (Dreachslin, 2007). Diversity initiatives have overarching goals and need leaders in positions of authority to champion their integration into the overall institutional agenda. Some authors like Kezar (2007) suggest that leadership is perhaps the most important factor in institutionalizing a diversity agenda (Kezar, 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2005).

Research participants speculated, based on their experiences and conversations at the University that "upper administration" did not agree with each other and were never on the same page about the work of the Task Force for Diversity and the culminating document, the proposed diversity plan. These participants surmised that upper administrators' feedback and comments may not have matched what the Chancellor asked for in his charge to the Task Force for Diversity and this impacted the final version of the diversity plan. One participant

believed that "the format, the length, the contents of the plan were all tweaked in response to 'upper administration's requests'" but the resulting document still did not please them; thus, there was no adoption of the plan.

A major concern expressed by the study participants was how the University was going to organize to tackle the issue of diversity especially because the position of Associate Vice Chancellor focusing on issues of equity and diversity was "given back" as a part of budget cuts when that person retired in the Fall of 2009. The institution again was at a crossroads in terms of deciding how it was going to put a face on diversity issues. The question was raised: who is going to be a champion for diversity? Focus Group Member #10 shared:

> I just know that that (the loss of the AVC position) further informs my lack of knowing and lack of understanding of where the University is with diversity. I know that we've lost a lot of minority faculty over the past year and I can't say what's been done to be intentional about recruitment and retention. My understanding is that there is not a whole lot being done right now—that's what I've been told.

The University truly needs to make a more conscious effort, in the words of individual interviewee #4:

> To be more supportive of diversity initiatives which is going to require major additional personnel, major additional funding, but making the effort to get the numbers, to keep the numbers, to do that part of it along with being, changing the definition of what diversity is, that it's just not numbers.

Study participants understood and accepted that the University is initiating many new programs simultaneously and that there is justification not to implement new initiatives,

especially with the economic downturn. Even so, many felt that some diversity initiatives were put forth that required little in terms of cost and could be implemented easily. For example, the University can easily incorporate diversity education into the First Year Seminar for all incoming students and into orientation programs for all current and incoming employees.

Communication and Follow-Up. One of the major barriers identified by study participants is that of communication (or the lack thereof) between upper administration, the Chancellor, the Task Force for Diversity members, the University community, and the community-at-large. For the Task Force for Diversity co-chairs and even committee chairs, it seems to make sense that they would have access to the Chancellor because he convened the task force and charged a select number of people to complete certain tasks. However, it was perceived that access was not open or readily available.

One study participant shared a personal experience about attempting several times to request an interview with the Chancellor. She reported that emails remained unanswered and phone calls, though promised to be returned, were also unanswered. This participant stated:

> I understand that the nature of his position means he has to juggle competing, urgent, and multiple demands; it would have been quite a boost in morale for the members of the Task Force for Diversity, especially the committee chairs, if the Chancellor would have found the time to meet or have some form of communication with them.

The lack of connection and communication with the Chancellor seems to only amplify the issues of isolation, helplessness, and hopelessness that some of the research participants expressed.

Research participants stated that they have had no communication from anyone regarding the end result of the plan and therefore no knowledge about the next steps for the plan. Indeed, there has not been any additional information about the plan or the process from the co-chairs since the summer of 2009, mainly due to the fact that the final revised document was sent to the Chancellor and no feedback was ever received except during a small forum in January of 2010 when it was announced that he was charging three people on campus to head up an effort to help find a consultant "to aid us and help move us ahead." Unfortunately, many of the research participants were not aware of the meeting or the announcement so they continued to be "in the dark" about the status of their hard work.

An important suggestion was made by study participants that the Chancellor meet with the Task Force for Diversity so that he could provide them with an update about the status of the diversity document and also provide a status report on what was to be expected. Another reason for this face-to-face meeting was for the Chancellor to "release" or "charge" the Task Force for Diversity because he was, in the words of individual interviewee #3, "very intentional in letting the task force know (during a meeting in the Fall of 2008) that he was not releasing them from their duties, that there was a possibility that he still might need to call on them and have additional work."

Finally, all of the study participants unanimously agreed that there needed to be better follow up in such a process and undertaking because they believed that ultimately, the entire Task Force for Diversity was left in the dark not only about whether or not the plan was accepted and approved, but also whether or not their work was completed and culminated in a successful document. One participant verbalized that "there's been a disconnect with the feedback to the committee as a whole and really the community-at-large" because the

community-at-large knew that there was a Task Force for Diversity that was looking at some of these things and yet the Task Force for Diversity had not really engaged the community in any way either before something was finalized.

Summary

Glesne (2006) posited that qualitative research seeks to find meaning in personal narratives that promote understanding of some social phenomena. The foundational assumptions of qualitative research include the facts that reality is socially constructed and that the variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure. The themes gleaned from focus group and individual interviews in this research study served as a kind of "pedagogical reflection and interrogation" (Kanpol, 1999, p. 17), which expanded the conceptual space of transformation, exploration, uncertainty, and discovery (Eisner, 2002). In essence, participants and I engaged in more than just a case study; we were involved in investigating and challenging what the literature said about diversity planning in higher education.

By implementing phenomenological interviews and utilizing a case study approach, the previous sections presented an historical and also contemporary analysis of the processes and events contributing to the University's efforts with diversity initiatives. They also relied heavily upon the lived experiences and perspectives of a diverse group of administrators, faculty, and students who are committed to diversity in higher education.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how the University mapped a course towards implementing integrated diversity initiatives as a result of the work of the Task Force for Diversity and to investigate the contexts in which the institution and its personnel arrived at the current state of *A Plan for Diversity*. This chapter has provided a discussion of

the findings from the data as presented from participant observations and reflexive journaling, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and document review. The categories, themes, and sub-themes that emerged from the data provided a comprehensive yet cohesive framework for this study to understand the Task Force for Diversity members' perceptions as they relate to the University's diversity plan.

The study participants' responses model how people develop their own beliefs and biases based on their life experiences and environment. This chapter discussed study participants' responses to the interview questions and findings from other data sources. The interviewees shared their thoughts on the process and their personal experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity. Study participants shared that overall, being a member of the Task Force for Diversity was an interesting experience although many are not sure if they would say "yes" if they were approached again to serve in a similar capacity. Participants stated that because they now know "too much about what really is the commitment level and it's such a small piece of the bigger puzzle" that they don't know if they would be interested in being a part of something that "took up a lot of time and energy and tears and pain and lots of different emotions and hours of work for at this point, nothing."

In essence, the study participants' experiences during their tenure as members of the Task Force for Diversity highlighted the themes that were previously presented: the struggle with apathy; feelings of frustration, futility, hopelessness and helplessness; need for buy-in and leadership, and communication and follow up. Consequentially, the process of drafting and revising *A Plan for Diversity* for most, if not all of them, underscored how the University and the local community should have played a more significant role in the final draft of *A Plan for Diversity*.

Though in the minority, there were research participants like Focus Group Member #4 who stated:

> I do feel proud of the University, I think that that there are some initiatives out there, I think that there is acceptance…I see my colleagues wanting to incorporate more initiatives again and again. Some of those may be fairly superficial but looking at possibilities of internationalizing courses, bringing in issues of economics, disadvantaged people, I think is one of the biggest lacks of diversity here in our community and our town. There's also not [much] interaction with poverty, with people in need…but I do see initiatives, I see people wanting to participate and get more involved in that and for that I'm proud. I'm proud being at the University and I think there's lots of opportunities and there's some support for that.

Indeed, even as the majority of the study participants expressed disappointment at the current status of the proposed diversity plan, there are a few who believe that there have been and will continue to be efforts made that will impact future diversity initiatives at the University, including but not limited to the adoption of *A Plan for Diversity*.

The following chapter will expand and expound on the descriptive and preliminary discussions in this chapter and will include an analytic and interpretive account of my findings based on all data collected. Chapter 5 will also offer implications for educational practice and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis, Implications, and Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction

This qualitative study examined the experiences and perceptions of members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University in order to better understand their viewpoints and efforts in drafting and presenting *A Plan for Diversity*. A single case study design was used in an effort to gain deeper insight into these members' experiences and the process by which the Task Force for Diversity arrived at its proposed final draft of the diversity plan. Using the frameworks of phenomenology and critical theory, the issue of diversity is viewed as an occurrence within power structures that create imbalance while also creating awareness for social change in higher education.

Four recurring themes and several sub-themes emerged from participant observations, document review, focus group interviews and individual interviews with 20 members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University. The themes were: 1) the feeling of apathy; 2) futility; 3) buy-in and leadership; and 4) communication and follow up. This chapter will provide an overview of the research study, a discussion of the findings, remarks on how the major themes relate to the previous literature and how this study addresses the gap in the published literature, limitations of the research design, implications of the research for other institutions of higher education interested in pursuing diversity, and suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Study

For this research study, a qualitative single case study strategy and phenomenological approach hinging on critical theory were employed to gather and interpret rich data sources as a means for understanding the experiences of those who participated in the Task Force for Diversity. The case study approach allowed me the opportunity and structure to focus on the "particularity and complexity" of diversity efforts and interactions at the University as a single case (Stake, 1995, p. xi) and to look deeper into the complex interactions between study participants and the institution as a whole. Stake (2000) finds that the value of a case study is not measured by the number of cases selected, rather by the contributions of each case to enhance theory and inform future research.

While a single case study admittedly cannot provide a generalized basis for the understanding of integrated diversity initiatives at institutions of higher education, this research study shows that the case study can have widespread implications for similarly-sized or like-minded universities. Furthermore, the overall findings will connect this study to the larger literature about diversity planning in higher education.

This study explored the experiences of the members of the Task Force for Diversity with regard to diversity generally and the diversity plan specifically, before, during, and after the two-year period that the task force was active. The following guiding questions framed this qualitative case study:

1. How do the study participants understand and experience the issue of diversity generally and at the University specifically?

2. How do the study participants experience the process of drafting and revising the proposed diversity plan?

3. How do study participants perceive the final diversity plan? What do they describe as the strengths and weaknesses of the diversity plan?

Discussion of Findings

In the following sections, I review and sort the information gleaned from the study to allow the data to respond clearly to the research questions. The data are organized and focused around the four themes that emerged during the course of the research study: 1) feelings of apathy; 2) futility; 3) buy-in and leadership; and 4) communication and follow up. The impetus for this study originated from my desire to examine the experiences and perceptions of members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University in order to better understand their viewpoints and efforts in drafting and presenting *A Plan for Diversity*. I was interested in utilizing critical theory to underscore how implementing diversity initiatives may challenge established interests, power structures, institutional traditions, and identities in higher education.

Study participants highlighted how the University is located within an isolated, homogenous, predominantly White area in which little diversity is seen and accepted beyond the campus of the University. The instances of hate crimes and racial profiling that occurred at the University in the past few years seemed to confirm the perceived lack of transparency and the apathy that is found at the University and the local community in reaction to discriminatory acts. One research participant stated that if these situations had transpired in another university in another town, there would have been severe backlash, strong language against the act, and possibly even policy changes that would impact the university and the community. It seemed to some of the research participants that many people on campus were

unaware of the discriminatory acts, including that of the noose incident. One study participant put it succinctly: "it really makes you back up and think and makes you question whether or not we've come as far as we would like to think we have."

As a consequence, there is concern that students are not being prepared and/or equipped adequately to fully participate in a global society. Because diversity is fundamental to a quality educational experience in higher education, it is necessary for educational leaders to explore new ways to institutionalize their efforts. Research has shown that institutions that integrate diversity initiatives into their planning frameworks are more likely to be successful in embedding diversity in the institutional culture. Diversity advocates point out that students who have the opportunity to learn how to interact with a diverse community as part of their personal growth and development are better prepared to enter the global workforce (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

Response to Research Questions

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the initial research questions based upon the data discussed in chapter four. I will situate my research findings within the diversity literature to highlight the existing intersections and to pinpoint current gaps in the literature.

Research Question 1

How do the study participants understand and experience the issue of diversity at the University?

All of the participants in this research study had unique stories of their personal experiences with diversity both prior to and during their respective tenures at the University. These experiences formed the foundation for their participation in and contributions to the

Task Force for Diversity. In fact, their diverse personal stories, though ultimately leading to common themes, highlighted the richness and complexity of the issue of diversity in higher education.

Several participants acknowledged that their most meaningful experiences with diversity occurred during their college years when they were thrust unprepared into the sociopolitical and cultural labyrinth of their university and/or college's diversity (admittedly, mainly multiculturalism) efforts. To cope with the sudden internal struggle and conflict that most of them felt, the participants admitted they did one of two things: jump in with both feet to join the cause, or veer away from any and all involvement with diversity to "keep their noses clean." Ultimately, because each participant has chosen a career in education, they have realized that it was impossible to ignore the issue and thus have committed to, at the very least, discussing the topic of diversity with their students, with each other, and with the administration.

Study participants spoke frankly about their viewpoints and experiences with diversity at the University. Most seemed to understand and appreciate the importance of integrated diversity initiatives and diversity planning, but they also seemed to recognize the challenges the University faces in adopting a diversity plan without buy-in from the Board of Trustees, senior administrators, and even the community-at-large. The local community, in particular, seemed to produce anxiety in some study participants. A survey of students from minority populations, indicated that minority students mostly feel a sense of acceptance among their peers, faculty, and staff at the University. When those same students venture off campus, however, an entirely different feeling emerges. The campus climate seems to be warm and

welcoming, while the larger community feels a bit more cold and shrouded with fear for the minority students, faculty, and staff.

Study participants agree that most people would view the University as being a generally welcoming place but do admit that the students probably have more concerns than the faculty. They believe that because the University community constitutes such a large percentage of the local community—half of the entire population—that there are lesser issues that arise as compared to a similar community with a larger percentage of non-University people. Even though most of the study participants admit that the University is "glaringly White," they do believe that diversity is hard to ignore and that trying to increase diversity is a major issue that is and should be on everyone's mind.

Some study participants emphasized that the student focus groups that came out of the work of the Task Force for Diversity produced touching stories regarding what students deal with on a day-to-day basis at the University. One study participant shared:

I feel somewhat removed from that…and have never experienced any kind of prejudice, nothing but support here, but in terms of what students face in dormitories and things of that sort in the larger county community, I feel somewhat removed and disenfranchised from that.

Yet another participant said:

> I've heard, have looked at and seen a lot of student comments and some faculty comments and I know that it's obvious that there's some incidents of discrimination, all types of discrimination here on campus, but I don't feel like it's necessarily more or less than anywhere else and actually considering that we are a very rural White community, I guess I'm probably a little surprised there's not a lot more that you hear about.

There was unanimous agreement among the research participants that having a diverse student population prepares students better for the real world even as participants also bemoaned the fact that, in the words of Focus Group Member #1, "we are in a fairly lily White area and some of our students may be ill prepared for the real world and work place where they will face a spectrum of diversity so it would behoove us to increase diversity here and prepare them better for real life experiences." Study participants agreed that an important dimension in assessing a University's commitment to diversity is whether or not the student population is diverse and whether or not the institution has made progress over time by implementing programs and services and subsequently recruiting and retaining traditionally underrepresented students. This dimension should also consider the institution's history and progress in attracting, retaining, and promoting diverse staff and faculty. Members of the Task Force for Diversity expressed the desire to see more faculty, staff, and students of color recruited and retained and believe that this is a vital first step in ensuring that diversity is prioritized at the University and the community-at-large.

My review of the literature in Chapter 2 shows that students value being in an environment where they feel connected, treated with respect, supported, and engaged. Their experiences at a university influence them either to be engaged or to look elsewhere; therefore, it is necessary to attract and retain students, faculty, and staff members from diverse backgrounds. However, targeted recruitment may actually cause more issues due to unmet expectations (Avery & McKay, 2006). Essentially, in spite of a university's intentional efforts to recruit and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff, minority groups may continue to experience prejudice, face social isolation, and also struggle with engagement (Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008). Moreover, there is the danger that the majority group may feel

suddenly vulnerable and/or excluded by the university's efforts with diversity (Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). In fact, Iverson (2007) found that even well-intentioned attempts to create a more inclusive campus "may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequality" (p. 606). Those tasked with diversity initiatives need to be more informed and critical of the ways that such efforts are "discursively constituted so that they can begin the process of naming and dismantling racism in educational practice and policy making" (Lopez, 2003, p. 87). In addition, the web of power and privilege needs to be unveiled so that "meaningful conversations about racial inequality can occur, enabling policy makers to disrupt the status quo and destabilize the regulatory tendencies of dominant discourses" (Iverson, 2007, p. 607). Indeed, the literature has shown that politics often obstruct the change process in higher education because if an issue is deemed to be too political, then action will not take place (Kezar, 2001). When dominant groups feel intimidated, they seek to curb change and instead vigorously strive to uphold their privileged position (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee, 2005).

Another important step in implementing diversity initiatives in higher education is assessing the campus climate by gathering information from diverse groups. According to Hurtado, Carter, and Kardia (1998), building an inclusive community is not easy and does not just happen on its own; faculty and administrators must make a commitment to the effort and together work on a plan to ensure its success. Moreover, such initiatives need the support of various other constituents, including the students. It is essential, therefore, for the institution to share its diversity plan with students, faculty, administrators, and the local community.

Evaluating the climate for and receptivity to diversity is necessary for colleges and universities that desire to implement an integrated diversity initiative. Racial and ethnic sub-

groups often have differing views on diversity and how diversity affects their experience and satisfaction with campus climate. In fact, numerous reports validate the notion that awareness of and sensitivity to the cultural environment of an institution of higher education plays a considerable role in minority students' sense of belonging, satisfaction with, and social integration into colleges and universities. These reports suggest that "institutional neglect of the climate for diversity can significantly diminish students' feeling of being a part of campus life and creating a satisfying undergraduate experience" (Hurtado, Carter & Kardia, 1998, p. 57). Assessments on campus climates are therefore more likely to succeed if the campus community is engaged in proactively promoting and discussing diversity in its regular planning and evaluation processes. Thus, an institution should seek to develop its environment, regularly evaluate its progress, and also consider how it is perceived by its stakeholders including the students, faculty, alumni, the campus community, and the outside community.

In summary, in their responses related to the first research question, the study participants drew upon their personal understanding and experiences of diversity during their tenure as members of the Task Force for Diversity and as employees of the University. Moreover, study participants focused on the University and the local community's perceived commitment to diversity initiatives as evidenced by student, staff and faculty recruitment and retention as well as surveying the campus climate while simultaneously highlighting the challenges and seemingly ever-present roadblocks that hinder progress.

Research Question 2

How do study participants experience the process of drafting and revising the proposed diversity plan?

As discussed in the previous research question, study participants felt strongly that it was impossible to discuss their experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity without addressing the University and the local community's roles because they were a significant part of the context in which *A Plan for Diversity* was developed and drafted. Therefore, by asking this research question, study participants were able to consider again their personal experiences as members of the Task Force for Diversity as well as the reaction and responses of the University and the local community to the task force and to its work.

Most of the study participants expressed and reiterated the major themes of apathy, futility, buy-in and leadership, and communication. The strength of their voices in conveying these feelings regarding the process of drafting *A Plan for Diversity* is difficult to ignore and emphasizes the need for structural and institutional, as well as societal, changes before real diversity and change can take place at the University. Smith and Parker (2005) find that a clearly articulated plan that is instituted at the commencement of diversity initiatives allows for ongoing discussion regarding observable transformation. Instead of being hindered by policies and programs, a framework can be "useful in capturing both diversity work and its relevant indicators" (p. 121). The ability to measure outcomes in this process and to monitor the status of diversity initiatives within that context is essential to the success of any particular program. Placing diversity initiatives within an institutional framework is also helpful because it allows all involved in the process to monitor and assess activity and, in the process, to assure that specific goals are being met. Moreover, a framework "enables leaders to see how their programs contribute toward reaching the institutional goals rather than being isolated activities" (Smith & Parker, 2005, p. 121).

Study participants found the process of drafting and revising the proposed diversity plan to be difficult without the full cooperation and support of the University community as a whole. Many university activities that compete for time and attention often overwhelm members of the community so they tend to focus on what affects them most palpably at any given time. Many participants quickly realized the challenges of designing and implementing diversity plans--that even with the best laid intentions and concrete goals and objectives, the work of diversity planning sometimes becomes nebulous and ambiguous (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). However, there is agreement that a diversity initiative must be defined in terms of an educational process that permeates all aspects of university life.

If diversity is to be viewed as an important factor in higher education, institutions must understand how to integrate diversity initiatives into the fabric of the university. The literature concludes that colleges and universities that incorporate diversity into the fabric of the institution become more successful in advancing diversity as part of the culture and environment of the organization (Aguirre & Martinez, 2002). Other researchers agree that the most effective way of institutionalizing diversity is by embedding any and all efforts in the infrastructure of the university rather than launching numerous yet isolated initiatives and by integrating institutional values with everyday practices (Aguirre, 2000; Denson & Chang, 2009).

Institutions cannot simply rely on "the plan" to make an impact on its people even though diversity plans are necessary for establishing a campus atmosphere in which diversity initiatives are not taken for granted but championed by institutional leaders and embraced as priorities (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). A diversity strategic plan must be spearheaded by a strong administration that sets the vision for the university and provides leadership that is indicative

of a commitment to change (Jones Brayboy, 2003). The diversity plan equips institutional leadership to be responsible for tackling the challenges of diversity and provides a platform from which those who are traditionally voiceless can speak freely. Lastly, a strong diversity plan can present the opportunity for colleges and universities to implement integrated diversity initiatives that focus on people and not just "numbers" (Humphreys, 2000).

The University has requested and received voluminous information and feedback regarding diversity over the past 20 years from its various task forces and committees. However, members of the Task Force for Diversity expressed regret that they were not informed about efforts to implement the recommendations that emerged from their efforts initially. Many of the study participants were excited about the work that they were given as part of the Task Force for Diversity. However, that enthusiasm very quickly faded when discussions about previous task forces and the "black hole" for diversity plans and initiatives were brought up. Many of the study participants expressed frustration and helplessness because they invested so many hours in the Task Force for Diversity. With no news and/or movement about the next phase, they feel devalued both as members of the task force, and as members of the University community with a vested interest in its betterment. They also expressed concern about the members of the local community who were involved in the process and how the University was going to communicate with them about the results of the task force.

The study participants had expected that the next step after their work was completed was for the Chancellor to review the document and to share it with the Board of Trustees for approval and implementation. Many years hence, *A Plan for Diversity* as submitted has yet to be adopted and the process seems stalled. Frustration among the study participants is palpable

and understandable. With the departure of the co-chairs and the perceived apathy by the upper-level of university governance, the final version of the plan was never made available for public consumption. There are unanswered questions among study participants about the scope of the final draft and the inclusion or exclusion of key points proposed by individual subcommittees. Study participants stated they have very little, if any, knowledge about the content of the final version of *A Plan for Diversity* as submitted to university officials.

Study participants also seemed to carry strong opinions about the process of diversity planning, and those opinions are highlighted in discussions about the resulting work of the task force. However, they have little or nothing to report about outcomes because they have no knowledge or experience in that phase of the process. Unfortunately, the lack of adoption and implementation, not to mention the general dearth of information about the content of the final product, has clouded judgments of the entire process and reinforced any speculation that the work itself was a study in futility.

Research Question 3

How do study participants perceive the diversity plan? What do they describe as the strengths and weaknesses of the diversity plan?

Study participants felt frustrated and expressed negative emotions about the work of the group and their collective mission to design and implement a comprehensive diversity plan. Most study participants reported that they felt like their work was important and that they were able to make significant contributions to their individual subcommittees as they concentrated on each strategic direction. The subcommittees' individual reports were two years in the making before being forwarded to the co-chairs of the Diversity Task Force for condensation and submission to the University administration. The entire document, in its

final form, was never shared widely among the University or local community, nor were members of the Task Force for Diversity provided with updates and feedback. In fact, there is no real clarity among study participants as to whether a draft was shared with higher-level deans and other administrators or not. This lack of clarity proved both frustrating and upsetting to the task force members who invested so much time in a product that is now seemingly invalid.

These study participants' experiences are not unique. The literature suggests there are common roadblocks to effective diversity planning in institutions of higher education. For example, many universities fail to measure the effectiveness of the planning process or the plan itself. There may be a general disconnect between the diversity strategic plan and the overall university strategic plan. Only certain people within the institution are doing the work of diversity or are invested in the plan for the long term. Institutions often treat diversity programming as a requirement to be fulfilled rather than as an agent for university advancement (Smith & Parker, 2005).

Indeed, many university diversity initiatives fail due to lack of clear measurement or assessment and evaluation tools. Such tools need to measure enrollment and graduation rates as well as access, retention, and campus climate (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2007). Like the University, several institutions of higher education continue to struggle with implementing diversity initiatives on their campuses. Research has shown that colleges and universities with similar characteristics to the University, like Tiffin University and Allegheny College, faced challenges not unlike those experienced by research participants during their time as members of the Task Force for Diversity.

Richard J. Cook, president of Allegheny College in northwestern Pennsylvania, during the period of diversity planning at that university, wrote the following reflection:

> The past five years have set Allegheny College firmly on the path to fulfilling a commitment to enhance diversity on our campus. Enhancing diversity has been a key element of our strategic planning, and investing our entire community in reaching this goal has resulted in measurable successes. But it is important that college and university presidents realize that their role in this process is absolutely pivotal and that they must be both forward-thinking and aggressive in advancing their diversity goals. Allegheny's story, while unique in its details, likely reflects a wider reality at many small residential campuses around the country. (2008, p. 1)

Cook emphasized that theirs was a long-range strategic plan and not a barrage of short-term initiatives. He urged diversity advocates to be patient and realistic, reminding them that significant change comes only with a lasting commitment, over time, and may happen as a result of multiple, even failed, diversity efforts that will one day lead to long-lasting change.

Indeed, diversity planning efforts need to be viewed more as a non-linear process with zigs and zags that often present challenges to those tasked with "success" and completion of the planning process. When understood and accepted in this sense, failures become merely an unfinished process, one by which, hopefully, with ample time and commitment, can truly result in widespread acceptance of diversity initiatives.

The process that university initiatives go through along the way to implementation and full integration is usually collaborative. Because this standard procedure of collaboration became unclear with regard to the proposed diversity plan, study participants assumed that *A Plan for Diversity* was not taken seriously and had become a taboo subject. There is broad

speculation among the study participants that many of the people required to implement the task force recommendations were resistant when the report came to light and this contributed to an indefinite shelving of the plan.

Study participants concede that improvements in the area of diversity have been made at the University throughout the years; however, a completed comprehensive diversity plan has never been in place and fully integrated into the system. The plan that this specific Task Force for Diversity had been working toward is the third in fifteen years. There was diminishing hope among study participants that the plan would meet with any more success than the previous two. The study participants called this approach to diversity, "start and stop" and labeled it "disheartening." Some speculate that the size of the task force, with almost 50 members, itself was a set-up for failure with already-overextended (and perhaps unaware) committee chairs ultimately required to do most of the work.

Some participants believed that the administration had given up whatever stock it had invested in diversity long before the final plan was submitted. In the midst of a budget crisis, the administrative position that was intended to champion diversity was eliminated. Without that person in place, task force members had little hope that their plan would work itself into the University's culture. Study participants started to feel both hopeless and helpless, as if their work on behalf of the University did not matter. Finally, study participants felt that they were left out of the conversation at key moments regarding the plan and its implementation. This exclusion left members in confusion over how to answer questions about the state of the diversity plan. It also left them longing for a leader who would provide timely communication and effective follow-up on the work of the group.

Implications

As researchers, diversity scholars, university officials, and those involved in integrating diversity initiatives in institutions of higher education continue to work toward transforming their organizations, it is imperative to recognize the complexity of the diversity planning process and the myriad factors that are involved. The findings from this research study have implications for the development and implementation of diversity initiatives on university campuses and for future research into diversity initiatives. While a single case study cannot provide a universal basis for the implementation of integrated diversity initiatives in a college or university, it does have supporting implications as well as critiques for the current literature and for several audiences.

Both history and the literature covering diversity in higher education inform us that any diversity effort, whether in the planning or implementation stage, will be successful when the effort focuses on the following elements: definition and vision for diversity, strategic planning and leadership, university-wide buy-in and involvement, and communication in the community (Kezar, Eckel, Contreros-McGavin, & Quaye, 2008). However, as this research study shows, this is not necessarily the case. For example, even as the University sought to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the process, being intentionally inclusive to a wide range of participants, the size of the task force actually became a pitfall as the task force grew to be unwieldy in size and thus, difficult to manage. In fact, most of the subcommittees eventually became non-working committees, with the interview data revealing that the bulk of the work was being done by only a small number of committee members.

Moreover, researchers posit that diversity must first be clearly defined in order to gain commitment within higher education. Steve Michael, Vice Provost and professor of higher

education at Kent State University (Ohio), in a 2007 keynote address at a community college in Maryland said:

> Often institutions invest resources in diversity activities without actually defining what they mean by diversity. Some shy away from defining diversity because of the controversial nature of a diversity agenda. Others shy away because of the challenge or the inability to please everyone. However, if we cannot define it, we cannot measure it, and if we cannot measure progress, then anything we do in the name of diversity may or may not be considered appropriate or worthwhile. A definition of diversity in higher education ought to stem from higher education philosophy. It should be based on the role higher education is expected to play in our civilization. (para. 5)

Experts believe that by providing a cohesive, comprehensive, and operational definition for diversity, a college or university could ensure that the campus community has a clear understanding of what diversity means. Such a definition of diversity presents a common platform that frames a unified understanding of the policies needed and the implementation plan for the institution to succeed (Brown, 2004). This was again not the case at the University. While participants had a common desire to be inclusive in their final definition of diversity, they were nevertheless unable to gain momentum in gaining support for implementation of the proposed diversity plan.

Indeed, it seemed like it would take more than just developing a definition and a vision for the University to provide the much-needed direction to move forward with diversity initiatives. In fact, there has been much discussion in the literature among diversity scholars and university administrators about what needs to transpire at institutions of higher education

to implement integrated diversity plans but what is truly lacking is a cohesive and progressive vision as well as practical and realistic goals to ensure that the plan is a success. The literature for change in higher education suggests that the transformational process has to be approached from a strategic perspective. Therefore, experts say, it is important for colleges and universities to develop diversity goals that will allow them to organize resources, priorities, etc. to be consistent with their capabilities so they can align appropriate individuals in positions where they can help achieve these outcomes (Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

Strong and courageous leadership in higher education is often touted as a requirement when tackling the subject of diversity. Theoretically, an institution's commitment to diversity on campus begins with the President's or Chancellor's public decision to make diversity a priority at all levels of the organization. Next, this decision must be included in the institution's mission, vision and values as well as operating documents. Institutions that truly value diversity show their commitment by codifying their intention on paper, informing all people at all levels of the organization that diversity initiatives are essential to its existence (Knox & Teraguchi, 2005)

Even though the University's Task Force for Diversity carried the Chancellor's name, it did not seem to garner much traction in accomplishing its charge. Study participants' responses were insightful as to the work that progressed over many months behind closed doors. In retrospect, when one considers the larger context of the assignment, members of the Task Force for Diversity were singularly focused and had high hopes for success. In fact, some of the members of the current task force were involved in past diversity planning at the University. However, none of the previous plans were introduced to the University and the local community nor did they impact the university community in the positive manner that

was imagined at their inception. Because of this perceived apathy and failure from past experience, most of the study participants embarked on their involvement with the latest Task Force for Diversity with hopefulness, albeit also with wary expectations. One participant said:

> I knew coming into this that there had already been several attempts at a diversity plan but I was really hoping that this time would be different. I'm sure that all of us who participated in the task force fully intended to complete the task but one can't help but wonder, even if it's at the back of my mind, is it really going to be different this time around?

While there was no doubt in my mind that the members of the Task Force for Diversity were invested in the process of change from the beginning, it was quite evident from a review of the meeting minutes and from the individual and focus group interviews that the committees within the task force itself operated with different levels of effort and achievement. Some committee chairs reported that attendance at meetings was irregular and that it was difficult to convince members to give these meetings priority. Others said that there was steady turnover in committee personnel and that the resulting lack of continuity over time took its toll on the process of fleshing out the issues and meeting consensus in a timely manner.

Moreover, the co-chairs of the Task Force for Diversity who made passionate pleas to the University upper administration for policy reform with regard to diversity and who championed and held the group together ultimately found themselves as frustrated with the seeming lack of priority afforded diversity generally, and the task force specifically. Both individuals left the University near the end of the work of the Task Force for Diversity to pursue other interests.

Educators and educational leaders in an interdisciplinary setting are accustomed to opening a circle of inquiry, collecting information, formulating a plan, implementing a process, then evaluating the plan and process to determine best practices and next steps. In the case with the Task Force for Diversity and *A Plan for Diversity* at the University, the process was stalled at midpoint to the frustration of all involved. Whatever strengths or weaknesses that exist within the plan will never be realized or discovered.

For these reasons, and for many more that were discussed in Chapter 4, study participants' experiences in drafting *A Plan for Diversity* do not mirror much of what is found in the literature. On the contrary, where in the literature it predicts success, this study found that diversity planning, even while complying with many of the guidelines presented by experts and research studies, is truly a difficult, messy process, rendering those tasked with the job of making it happen oftentimes feeling confused, frustrated, and helpless.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of higher education by sharing the study participants' perspectives about how diversity planning is not a "cut and dried" process and is actually a very complicated enterprise involving politics, power, people, and pragmatism. Critical theorists have long called out inequality in education and the unequal power distribution in society and social injustice as a whole. Indeed, because organizational structures are created by the dominant group (oppressor) in society, organizational structures like the University will tend to benefit the dominant group while marginalizing (whether consciously or not) the minority group. Organizational structures like the University can be perceived as a means for transmission and reproduction of the dominant group's values in order to wield power and control over those outside the dominant group (Apple, 2005).

The University prides itself in being progressive and tolerant and it has, in many ways, pioneered initiatives that benefit most people. However, in the arena of diversity, the University continues to struggle, especially in the past two decades. In this short span of time, at least three task forces were formed to develop a diversity plan. Each time, the groups delivered and yet, each time, the diversity plans were not adopted. This, to me, and most especially to the study participants, highlights the different political interests at work at different levels within the University, which seem to have affected the diversity planning process. This study should awaken a desire for further study on the subject of diversity planning in higher education. The literature has shown that gaps do exist in studies about diversity in higher education, specifically in how diversity planning is undertaken, and results (un)achieved. The experiences of the study participants, members of the Task Force for Diversity at the University, have highlighted the difficulty of the process of diversity planning in a university, and I believe this study will have impact on the scholarly higher education community-at-large. More importantly, this study should continue to blaze a path to more fully understand the failures and successes of diversity planning in higher education.

Diversity planning, particularly in higher education, is a complex matter. Even with the proliferation of literature regarding diversity initiatives and how to successfully implement such initiatives, the hands-on work in the trenches trying to integrate diversity into colleges and universities is painstaking and consuming work, involving both time and resources. Many colleges and universities face a deep tension in voicing their ideals (“We value diversity!”) against all the micro-interests that hinder movement towards diversity work. This research project surfaces the deep ambivalence, the tension between espoused values and institutional cultures that have histories and people in them, and how these values and cultures don't

change quickly. This study exposes those gaps in many institutions—especially in colleges and universities having a dominant White identity like the University.

Recommendations

Diversity is complex, controversial, and a catalyst for change in higher education. If diversity initiatives are to be embedded into a university's infrastructure, these plans must be accepted by the stakeholders and included in the institution's core mission (Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007). The literature suggests that institutions of higher education should indicate their commitment to diversity in their mission statements because mission statements signify the institution's objectives. The inclusion of diversity initiatives in a university's mission statement provides validity to this very important topic and allows for education and dialogue within the campus as well as in the community (Bensimon, Polkinghorne, & Bauman, 2003).

Effecting change in higher education is difficult and should not be viewed as a short-term initiative (Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998; Kezar, 2008). Institutional transformation is a change process that is intentional, systematic, and affects the entire organization (Kezar, 2008). Institutionalizing diversity is often more difficult than any other initiative and/or endeavor because many people do not necessarily see the work as important or needed or as part of the larger university structure. It is important to have a systemic focus and to strategically link diversity initiatives to the overall mission of the institution (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2007; Williams, 2008).

This study presents practical recommendations for how institutions of higher education like the University can approach this issue, realizing that in order to implement change in any organization takes an understanding of the need for change and ownership in the process of

change. Fullan (2006) writes that "if you want to change systems, you need to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among individuals" (p. 116). It would have benefitted the plan, and ultimately the University itself, to have had senior administrators, including the Chancellor, dialogue regularly with his task force to not only secure buy-in, but also to promote trust and to increase understanding of the expectations from each other.

Diversity Defined. The term diversity needs to be examined more closely and institutions of higher education need to determine if diversity should still be the word used to convey differences and inclusion together. Much like its predecessors, affirmative action and multiculturalism, diversity seems to have lost its shine and, more importantly, its justice edge. Perhaps, as diversity scholars contend, the term of choice during this time should be "inclusive excellence" as it appears to transmit a more complete explanation of the concept behind all the previous words regarding multiplicity that academia has utilized in the past few decades (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). The word diversity seems to have become so full that it has become empty.

Therefore, institutions of higher education intent on implementing diversity initiatives must have an agreement and acceptance of the appropriate term to use, as well as a vision that is clearly defined, articulated, and linked to its overall mission, to ensure that all stakeholders and constituents understand their role and are working towards the same goal. A campus climate survey or institutional assessment may be needed to understand the challenges of the environment and determine whether the University is ready for a transformational change. Results of such surveys and assessments must be shared with the Board of Trustees and the University's administration because they are the key personnel who will need to have buy in and express their commitment to drive any large-scale initiative, approve and provide

manpower and funding resources, and understand what is necessary to transform the campus environment.

As part of its diversity planning process, the Task Force for Diversity conducted several surveys and assessments but, because they were either sent out by specific subcommittees or by the co-chairs of the task force themselves, not many task force members were privy to the results. Study participants expressed strongly their belief that the work of the task force would have been more effective if the results of the surveys and assessments were shared with all the members of the Task Force for Diversity, with university senior administration, and with the community-at-large.

Placing diversity initiatives within an institutional framework is helpful because it allows all involved in the process a context to monitor and assess activity and, in the process, to assure that specific goals are being met. Moreover, a framework "enables leaders to see how their programs contribute toward reaching the institutional goals rather than being isolated activities" (Smith & Parker, 2005, p. 121). The literature includes several models and frameworks that have been developed for understanding change related to diversity in higher education but such models have not focused on the struggle to actualize transformational diversity efforts in institutions like the University (Williams, 2006; Williams, et al, 2005).

A critical factor in ensuring that diversity initiatives are successful is developing a system-wide infrastructure that incorporates diversity at every level of the institution's operation, policies and practices. Given the results of the diversity planning process and the work of the Task Force for Diversity, it is evident that this element is still lacking at the University. For the University and for every institution of higher education to successfully

implement integrated diversity initiatives, it is imperative that diversity becomes embedded in every area of the institution of higher education, discussed and practiced constantly, and evaluated frequently, until it becomes second nature.

Strategic Planning. Change is indeed difficult in higher education and effecting change to create diverse learning and professional environments is particularly challenging (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). In contexts like the University, what happens after a diversity plan is drafted is dependent on the institution's commitment and priorities towards the larger issue of diversity. Eckel and Kezar (2003) found that resistance to any kind of change effort in higher education is common because people are afraid of the potential outcomes of the change process. Therefore, it is imperative to mitigate such fears by planning ahead and determining how to best manage expected resistance. A strategic plan for diversity that engages the entire campus and promotes a sense of ownership within the campus community, and also the local community, can be achieved by studying and identifying the implications of taking the necessary steps and forging ahead with confidence for the greater good of the institution and society. This, I believe, needs to be where the University should now focus its efforts because it did not accept and adopt *A Plan for Diversity* as drafted and presented by the Task Force for Diversity.

The strategic plan that the University creates must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders and constituents within and outside the university and clear and realistic expectations and priorities must be set so that diversity can be approached in an intentional and systematic way. In addition, timing for the implementation of strategies is of paramount importance and must be carefully considered, without ignoring elements in the University's other initiatives that could possibly curtail the diversity plan.

Strategic planning is necessary to emphasize the importance of the task of diversification, to set goals that are both realistic and attainable, and to hold accountable those who are responsible for the implementation of a diversity initiative (Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). Furthermore, an effective diversity strategic plan will play a strong role in a university's overall strategic plan and will lay the groundwork to achieve a healthy campus culture. Developing diversity strategic plans can be viewed as best practice because they highlight the importance of diversity initiatives and create realistic goals that convey the significance of such initiatives to constituents, ensuring that diversity has a place in institutional financial and resource planning.

Moreover, comparison and emulation are essential to institutional strategic planning, as peer institutions can assist colleges and universities in identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991). Environmental scanning is critical in order for institutions of higher education to find their niche between what it is and what its constituents desire it to be. By ascertaining its peer and also aspirational institutions, the University can formulate and, in fact, strengthen its environmental scanning exercise. In fact, the research literature establishes that integrated diversity efforts are more effective and that an institution's commitment to diversity is directly related to its reach and scope during its environmental scanning process (Hurtado, Carter, & Kardia, 1998; Hurtado, et al., 1999; Hutchinson & Hyer, 2000).

Indeed, an increasing number of institutions of higher education are developing and embracing comprehensive diversity plans to guide changes in campus policies and procedures as a result of emulating peer and aspirational institutions (Humphreys, n.d.). Some exemplary institutions when it comes to the subject of diversity, like the University of Wisconsin-

Madison and the University of Michigan, have had diversity plans in place for almost 20 years. The "Madison Plan" and the "Michigan Mandate" are two examples of a cohesive and intentional diversity plan. The University and other colleges and universities interested in diversity planning would do well to learn from and emulate these plans, as they include clear and comprehensive vision statements and far-reaching goals as well as specific recommendations in a variety of areas including leadership and accountability, student and faculty recruitment, development and retention, financial aid, campus climate, community and alumni cooperation, and improving the university environment for diversity.

Another institution, Middlesex Community College in Bedford, Massachusetts, though not a four-year university, has a similar demographic to the University in this research study: students mainly came from surrounding suburban towns and were mostly first generation college students who "had limited experience with other cultures, and, according to faculty and staff members, many were not tolerant of those who were different from them" (Aragon, 2000, p. 64). The college has successfully implemented a series of diversity initiatives that created a campus climate in which students stated that they truly value differences in others and appreciate diversity. Moreover, the initiatives there were proven to be sustainable over a period of a few years and not dependent on limited budget factors because existing personnel were utilized and funds were reallocated to support the work. In addition, the college provided funds for part-time faculty and stipends for students participating in some of the programs.

Another recommendation is for the University to use or connect existing institutional strategic themes to shape and provide symbolic energy and focus to diversity initiatives (Hirschhorn & May, 2000). These themes should invite individuals to think about what it

means to be involved, especially because diversity is not generally viewed as an important issue at the University (Gladwell, 2000). Moreover, diversity initiatives require long-term, ongoing iterations that necessitate institutional commitment anchored in the institution's core mission and values that can withstand leadership changes (Williams & Clowney, 2007).

Finally, as part of the strategic planning process, providing ongoing diversity education, gathering feedback, providing support to key players, and partnering with the local community should all be prioritized. Only by taking these necessary steps will institutions of higher education like the University reduce uncertainty and accelerate the very important work of diversity.

Leadership. Much like any comprehensive change effort, strong and courageous leadership in higher education is essential when tackling the subject of diversity. In fact, visionary leaders are needed now more than ever (Humphreys, 2000). Unfortunately, "so much of what is espoused in the name of leadership appears tepid, measured, and without fire and fury" (Hale, 2004, p. 14). The University's leadership (i.e., Board, Chancellor, etc.) should assess how important it is for them to focus on diversity as a priority and should publicly charge an appointed administrator, in most cases the Chancellor, with implementing the diversity initiatives in such a way that they are fully integrated into the institution's mission and strategic plan. Most diversity scholars agree for the need to assign a "face" to the work of diversity, either as a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) position or an entire department, complete with its own financial resources and systems, and must ensure that this person and/or position is known by everyone on campus, and more importantly, that this office truly engages with the important work of diversity. This office must be a transformative presence that

permeates the entire institution even as it serves to represent the commitment of the leadership to resolve issues of discontentment with campus climate.

The CDO needs to implement initiatives that have large-scale visibility by leading strategic diversity efforts and monitoring the institution's progress in these areas. These initiatives could include, but should not be limited to: institutional practices focusing on diversity, such as enhancing awareness through training and pedagogy, recruitment, promotion, and retention as well as graduation rates, integrating diversity into the performance management process, and utilizing data-driven evaluation plans to monitor progress from the departmental and institutional levels. Moreover, the CDO must involve key constituents and stakeholders from the University and the community-at-large in coordinating diversity initiatives so that total buy-in, cooperation, and collaboration are achieved, thereby promoting successful partnerships and outcomes. Future studies that investigate the role of such a leader in the development, implementation, and evaluation of diversity initiatives at this University could provide additional and valuable insight for leaders in higher education.

Communication and Trustworthiness. The American Association of Community Colleges (2005) posits that effective communication—the ability to articulate and champion The University's shared mission, vision, and values to internal and external audiences while actively listening to constituents and stakeholders to understand, comprehend, analyze, engage and act—is required of every 21st century educational leader. University leaders must find ways to involve other people in their decisions. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) state that people have the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen, as well as have the right to make a request or ask a question, and just as importantly, the recipient has the right to make his or her own decision without apology.

Indeed, an essential factor in effective leadership (and in impacting organizational change) is the ability to communicate and foster the communication process (Wergin, 2007). Ongoing and more effective communication is required to ensure that the needs of stakeholders are considered thoroughly, regular input is gathered from the campus community and the local community, and that everyone is on the same page regarding the identified needs and how to address those needs. Moreover, commitment needs to be gained, even as institutional configurations are adjusted and collaborations at various levels of the University are developed and tested. These roles and relationships, along with removing potential roadblocks, are crucial in implementing and managing the proposed diversity initiatives. Communication and feedback loops also foster transparency with regard to the University's diversity initiatives. Examples of such efforts may include town hall meetings, bulletin boards and newsletters, email blasts, or, in this age of technology, using Twitter, Facebook, and other social media to stay connected, provide information, and gather feedback.

Another key element necessary for the University and its leaders to be successful in undertaking an important initiative such as diversity is to demonstrate trustworthiness. Trust has been identified as a key ingredient in healthy work environments with effective outcomes (Wong & Cummings, 2009). In settings like the University, a perception of trust in the administration is imperative for people to be willing to voice concerns and offer suggestions while working collaboratively with each other to promote diversity on campus.

Assigning Diversity Resources. A frequent reason given for the failure to implement diversity initiatives in colleges and universities is that of the economy. In fact, budgets are, more often than not, used to justify why diversity initiatives are not a current priority. While shrinking budgets are a major concern in many colleges and universities, a way to show that

diversity is a priority at the University is to have people not just talking about valuing diversity but seeing it actualized in terms of allocation of resources, in terms of programs and initiatives that are being implemented, even as budgets are tight. Progress can only be made to the extent that financial support is available for the work. An institution that truly values diversity and deems it a real priority will make funding for diversity initiatives available no matter the instabilities of the economy or the resistance of some within the university itself (Clark, 2000).

Collaboration and Community. If diversity is going to be a significant initiative at the University, collaboration is also needed so that larger segments of the institution can be included in the process. Research has identified collaboration and building consensus as being effective in creating positive change (Daly & Crispeels, 2008; Kezar, 2004). As the literature for planned change indicates, most institutions struggle at the implementation level because there is failure to collaborate between key individuals and groups. Hence, collaboration and community must become the third leg, after communication and trustworthiness and assigned diversity resources, on the tripod that will drive the University to successfully implement its diversity plan.

Developing community outreach initiatives is essential to encourage faculty, staff, students, and leadership to promote diversity so that the local community can also help local businesses increase their knowledge and understanding in these important areas. Members of the campus and local communities should be provided with ample opportunities to provide feedback for how and what diversity initiatives should be implemented at the institution of higher education. Students, faculty, administrators, and local residents should feel that they have a voice in the discussion. This is imperative if the University wants to maintain credibility, gain support, and seek accountability, within and beyond its campus.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study found that for most of the study participants, their personal experiences with diversity influenced their beliefs and pedagogy in more positive ways than negative, leading them to desire authentic institutional change at the University. The research also found that there are myriad opportunities for other possible research studies with regard to participants' personal background and experiences, long-term processes for diversity planning, and institutional effectiveness related to integrated diversity initiatives at the University. More case studies investigating diversity generally and diversity planning specifically, at similarly-sized and rural universities would benefit the literature regarding diversity in higher education.

I attempted to locate other similar studies that highlighted a college or university's struggles with the adoption and/or implementation of diversity plans and initiatives but was unsuccessful. While there are several studies (Williams, 2008; Williams & Clowney, 2007) that highlight the successes and the merits of university diversity plans (e.g., the Madison Plan), I found nothing in the literature that addresses the specific challenges or even failures in the pursuit of such initiatives.

The findings of this study also point to several opportunities for possible future research studies with regard to universities developing diversity initiatives and/or diversity plans. More case studies investigating students, faculty and administrators' experiences and perceptions of diversity, particularly in higher education, and how these impact their commitment to diversity as evidenced by their participation in and contribution to their university's diversity efforts, would strengthen the value of this study. Because this study concluded with the development but not implementation of the University's *A Plan for Diversity,* a possible future research option would be to conduct a follow-up case study during

the implementation phase of *A Plan for Diversity* and to explore the roles of the participants, the process by which the plan is being implemented, and the final product(s) and how those factors together impact the University. Such research would provide similar universities and task forces with specific recommendations on how to avoid some of the pitfalls that might prevent successful implementation of an integrated diversity plan.

Because this case study involved one University and 20 participants, it is only able to present the perspectives of these students, faculty members, and administrators at this particular institution. To gain multiple perspectives on the importance of diversity in institutions of higher learning, further research is recommended. A study of a larger University with a wider range of study participants is recommended in order to gain an understanding of what influences universities to fully commit to implementing an integrated and system-wide diversity initiative. Furthermore, because this case study only looked at the perceptions of a small group of study participants at one institution, and some of those participants could have been influenced by previous exposure to and experiences with previous task forces focusing on diversity, I would recommend extending the research to the University's peer institutions. This extension would enable an analysis of the potential differences in strategies for implementing diversity initiatives with a similar university in a more comparable geographic environment.

Another possible area of future research is to focus on conducting an action research study whereby participants are involved in self-reflective inquiry in order to improve their universities' diversity initiatives. The action research framework is appropriate because participants will already recognize the deficiencies in their organizations and will be allowed to take a stand for diversity by formulating a plan, performing an intervention, evaluating

results, and developing supplementary strategies (Hopkins, 1993). Action research is "a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162). Action research is suited to evaluating change strategies in organizations where the effects of change are not easy to predict due to the complexity of factors involved, for example, that of human behavior. The intention is "for the approach to be flexible and responsive to unanticipated opportunities and constraints, and unintended outcomes…and also consider potential barriers and risks to achieving successful outcomes, including socio-political factors" ("Action inquiry," n.d.).

Future research efforts in implementing integrated diversity initiatives in higher education should continue to explore core assumptions and ideologies regarding diversity and how these are reflected in practice. There is a need to work toward better definitions of multicultural education and diversity and to identify the best means by which to go about achieving an integrated diversity initiative. A necessary ingredient for change is the recognition that things are still broken and that the issues encountered when implementing diversity initiatives are systemic and should be treated as such. Educators and administrators, faculty of color and White faculty, need to work hand-in-hand to overhaul institutional structures, instead of merely maintaining and strengthening current practices that are ineffective.

Conclusion

Page (2003) found that "by looking at the current trends in the way higher education implements…diversity, it is possible to forecast where…higher education may be heading" (p. 80). While the findings of this study may not be generalized to other universities, it may nevertheless have implications for educational practice and research for institutions that are similar to the University in size and in structure. The results of this study also have implications for creating a framework for diversity. In fact, similar universities may learn more lessons from the University's challenges and weaknesses than its strengths and successes in its search for its place in the diversity arena.

Efforts to plan and implement diversity initiatives at the University should continue. There have been some improvements and gains made over the past few years. As this research study indicates, institutionalizing diversity will not just happen, there has to be a focus, goals, and a coming together of the college community to make it happen.

An important conclusion that can be made from this study is that the University must clearly define and redefine diversity throughout the process of strategic planning. This can be done by communicating expectations for sustaining diversity and the role that each member, committee, or department has; continually addressing the issues and challenges that arise in order to have a foundation for ongoing progress in planning for and implementing an integrated diversity initiative for the entire university; and most importantly, having buy in and commitment from leadership and other key stakeholders at the University who can make or break the path already started by the study participants and other members of the Task Force for Diversity. My fervent desire is for the University to forge ahead in implementing *A Plan for Diversity* because it is certain to reap manifold rewards. These incentives may include:

diversifying the student, faculty and staff population, robust educational efforts to build awareness and sensitivity to the changing environment in the local community and the United States, improving curriculum to reflect diversity of thought and styles, and an overwhelming commitment from the entire campus community to supporting and integrating the initiatives into the very fabric of the University.

Previous research (Chun & Evans, 2008; Thomas, 2006; Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2007) has shown that universities benefit greatly from implementing diversity initiatives because a diverse campus population has been shown to provide a well-rounded education and intercultural experience that prepares students for the workforce and the global economy. The question remains: what does an integrated plan for diversity look like? Based on this research study, it seems that the responses would vary and would depend on the institution in terms of leadership, funding, commitment, campus issues, and the institution's continued ability and willingness to measure the impact of these factors not only on recruitment and retention of students, faculty and staff, but also student interaction, curriculum, academic performance, campus climate, community response, among others. In fact, the literature review in Chapter 2 shows that an integrated diversity plan is one that the campus community is invested in and every division and every department on campus has found ways to connect, not necessarily to every objective but to as many of the objectives that are applicable to their department or division and their work. As one study participant puts it, “it’s a way of life.”

The University as an institution needs to be willing to look, from every aspect, at the Task Force for Diversity’s work and the two-year process it took to complete the draft of *A Plan for Diversity*. While there are currently many negatives and weaknesses to recognize, there are also many positives and strengths to celebrate. The University needs to focus its

energies in areas where improvements are needed. Specifically, the University needs to determine what it is currently doing well and where its strengths lie with regard to diversity while also doing some deep soul searching to identify critical areas of improvement. Only then should the University step out boldly with a plan for implementation.

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Appendix A

Lay Summary

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine how the University is taking steps to implement integrated diversity initiatives. This research is part of my coursework as a doctoral student at Appalachian State University.

You have been chosen for this study because you were a member of the Task Force for Diversity. The benefits to you of participating in this study are: 1) you may to continue to share your thoughts, feelings, and opinions regarding diversity initiatives at the University; 2) you may develop greater self-awareness with regards to diversity; 3) you may find yourself understanding your decision-making process as a member of the task force better; and 4) you may gain increased understanding of your perceptions and beliefs and be able to contribute your insights to and possibly impact how diversity initiatives are implemented at the University and at other similar institutions.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. In the event that you experience discomfort at any time during your participation in the study, you will be given the option of leaving the study.

Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential and no identifying information will be used on reports generated by this study, including transcribed materials. If you are chosen to be one of my interviewees, I would like your permission to tape-record our interviews, and possibly videotape them and take notes to remind me of what we have discussed. All materials will be kept in strictest confidence, with access only by me. All notes, tapes, transcripts, and other materials related to this study will be stored until two years after the publication of my dissertation, at which time all these materials will be shredded, erased, and/or destroyed.

As a participant in this study, we will be spending several hours together completing the interviews and follow-up discussions. During the interview, I will ask you questions about yourself, your background and your experiences and your role as a member of the Task Force for Diversity. There is no right or wrong answer to the interview questions; I am simply seeking to understand your thoughts and experiences as someone who was involved in a very significant process at the University.

It is important for you to know that at any point during the study that you may choose not to participate or discontinue participation and that your decision will by no means hurt your relationship or any future contact with the University.

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project, which concerns the work of the University's Task Force for Diversity during the period August 2007 until the present time. I understand that my interview will be audio and/or videotaped, transcribed, and used for a doctoral dissertation to be conducted by Marian Tan Johnson who is currently a doctoral student and research assistant at the University. I understand that there are no foreseeable risks associated with my participation. I also know that this study may allow me to: 1) continue to share my thoughts, feelings, and opinions regarding diversity initiatives at the University; 2) develop greater self-awareness with regards to diversity; 3) understand my decision-making process as a member of the task force better; and 4) gain increased understanding of my perceptions and beliefs and be able to contribute my insights to and possibly impact how diversity initiatives are implemented at the University and at other similar institutions.

I give Marian Tan Johnson ownership of the tapes and transcripts from the interview(s) she conducts with me, and understand that tapes and transcripts will be kept in Marian Tan Johnson's possession. I understand that information or quotations from tapes and/or transcripts will not be directly ascribed to me and will not be published with my name unless the researcher contacts me for my written permission. I understand I will receive no compensation for the interview.

I understand that the interview is voluntary and I can end it at any time without consequence. I also understand that if I have questions about this research project, I can call Marian Tan Johnson at (828) 406-5584 or contact the University's Research Protection Office at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or irb@theuniversity.edu.

_____	_____
Name of Interviewer (printed)	Name of Interviewee (printed)
_____	_____
Signature of Interviewer	Signature of Interviewee
_____	
Date of Interview	

Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Questions

Demographic/Biographic Information

The information in this section will only be used to categorize and speak about task force members in general. No specific identifying information such as your name or position will be used in any part/report in this study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained during and after this project is completed.

Position (Administrator or Faculty Member): _____

Years in Education: _____

Years in Present Position: _____

Gender: Male Female

1. Describe your involvement in the Task Force for Diversity at the University. How and why did you get involved? What was your role?

2. How would you define diversity? What are your thoughts about diversity in higher education? In what ways do you think diversity is recognized or ignored? What, if any, are practices or programs that address issues regarding diversity in your opinion? How would you describe or define an integrated diversity plan for higher education?

3. Describe your initial experience with diversity at the University. What are your thoughts about the current policies and practices that the University employs with regard to diversity? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the University when it comes to diversity?

4. How would you describe or define an integrated diversity plan for higher education?

5. What are your thoughts about how the University has/is implementing such integrated diversity initiatives?

6. Describe the attitudes and perceptions of the students, faculty, and staff that you have come in contact with at the University with regard to diversity initiatives? How is diversity generally perceived at the University?

7. What barriers, if any, did you encounter as a member of the Task Force for Diversity (either at the faculty level, institutional level or even out in the community)?

8. What kinds of strategies and/or steps did you employ as a member of the Task Force for Diversity that was instrumental in drafting the final diversity plan for the institution? How do you think these strategies were accepted?

9. What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to be involved in the implementation phase of the University's diversity plan?

10. How familiar are you with the current status of the diversity plan? How much input do you feel that you have or have had in the diversity plan's final form?

11. Describe your overall vision for diversity at the University. How does this match with the institution's vision and commitment to diversity?

Appendix D

Individual Interview Questions

Demographic/Biographic Information

The information in this section will only be used to categorize and speak about task force members in general. No specific identifying information such as your name or position will be used in any part/report in this study. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained during and after this project is completed.

Position (Administrator or Faculty Member): _____

Years in Education: _____

Years in Present Position: _____

Gender: Male Female

1. Describe your involvement in the Task Force for Diversity at the University. How and why did you get involved? What was your role?

2. How would you define diversity? What are your thoughts about diversity in higher education? In what ways do you think diversity is recognized or ignored? What, if any, are practices or programs that address issues regarding diversity in your opinion? How would you describe or define an integrated diversity plan for higher education?

3. Describe your initial experience with diversity at the University. What are your thoughts about the current policies and practices that the University employs with regard to diversity? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the University when it comes to diversity?

4. Describe the attitudes and perceptions of the students, faculty, and staff that you have come in contact with at the University with regard to diversity initiatives? How is diversity generally perceived at the University?

5. What barriers, if any, did you encounter as a member of the Task Force for Diversity (either at the faculty level, institutional level or even out in the community)?

6. What roles do you play in promoting and implementing diversity at the University? What kinds of strategies and/or steps did you employ as a member of the Task Force for Diversity that was instrumental in drafting the final diversity plan for the institution? How

do you think these strategies were accepted?

7. What would you do differently if you had the opportunity to be involved in the implementation phase of the University's diversity plan?

8. How familiar are you with the current status of the diversity plan? How much input do you feel that you have or have had in the diversity plan's final form?

9. Describe your overall vision for diversity at the University. How does this match with the institution's vision and commitment to diversity?

10. What are the things that work at the University with regards to promoting diversity and why? What are things that do not work and why?

Vita

Marian Tan Johnson was born in Manila, Philippines, the third of seven children. She attended the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines and earned a Bachelor of Theology degree in 1993. In January of 1994, Ms. Johnson immigrated to the United States and began studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She completed both the Master of Arts in Education and the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling in 1996. Ms. Johnson studied fundraising management at New York University and completed the certificate programs from the Management and Executive programs in Not-for-Profit Management at the Columbia University Graduate School of Business, New York City, in 2006. In the summer of 2007, Ms. Johnson began work toward the Doctor of Education degree at Appalachian State University, which she completed in August of 2014.

Ms. Johnson is a National Board Certified Counselor, a Licensed Professional Counselor, a Registered Play Therapist Supervisor, and a Disaster Mental-Health Service Provider for the American Red Cross. She is active as a mental-health and non-profit consultant, conference leader, and has served in private practice as a psychotherapist. Ms. Johnson has spent the majority of her professional career as a non-profit administrator with concentration on mental health, child advocacy, inner-city youth mentoring, and cultural awareness.

Ms. Johnson lives in New York City with her husband R. Kevin Johnson and daughter Kairady Micah.